the most dangerous video game & comic 'zine

FLUX

ISSUE #5 • GRETCHEN & OJ?

DOOM DELUXE

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW for SNES, 3DO & ULTRa 64

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DARK FORCES (PC)

GEX (3DO)

MYST (3DO)

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (ARCADE)

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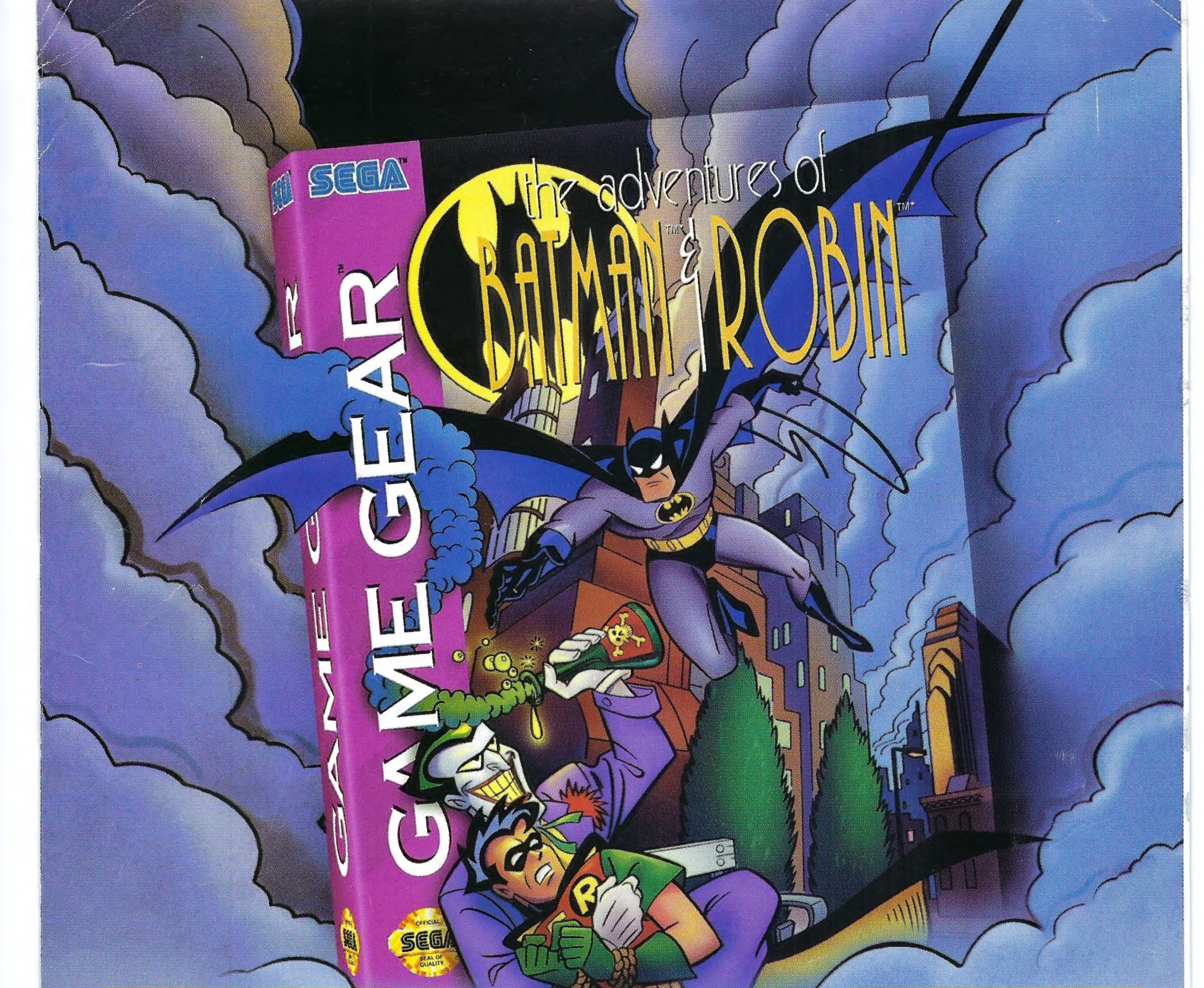

KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+

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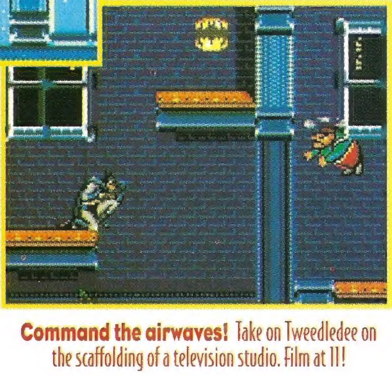
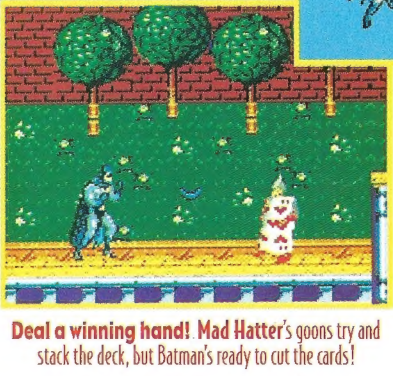
Start chillin'!
Mr. Freeze wants **Batman** iced, but the **Dark Knight** has his own plans for turning up the heat in **Gotham City**!



Command the airwaves! Take on Tweedledee on the scaffolding of a television studio. Film at 11!



Deal a winning hand! **Mad Hatter**'s goons try and stack the deck, but Batman's ready to cut the cards!

Now on Broadway!
Fly high above the skyscrapers of Gotham City to battle thugs at every turn!

the adventures of BATMAN & ROBIN™

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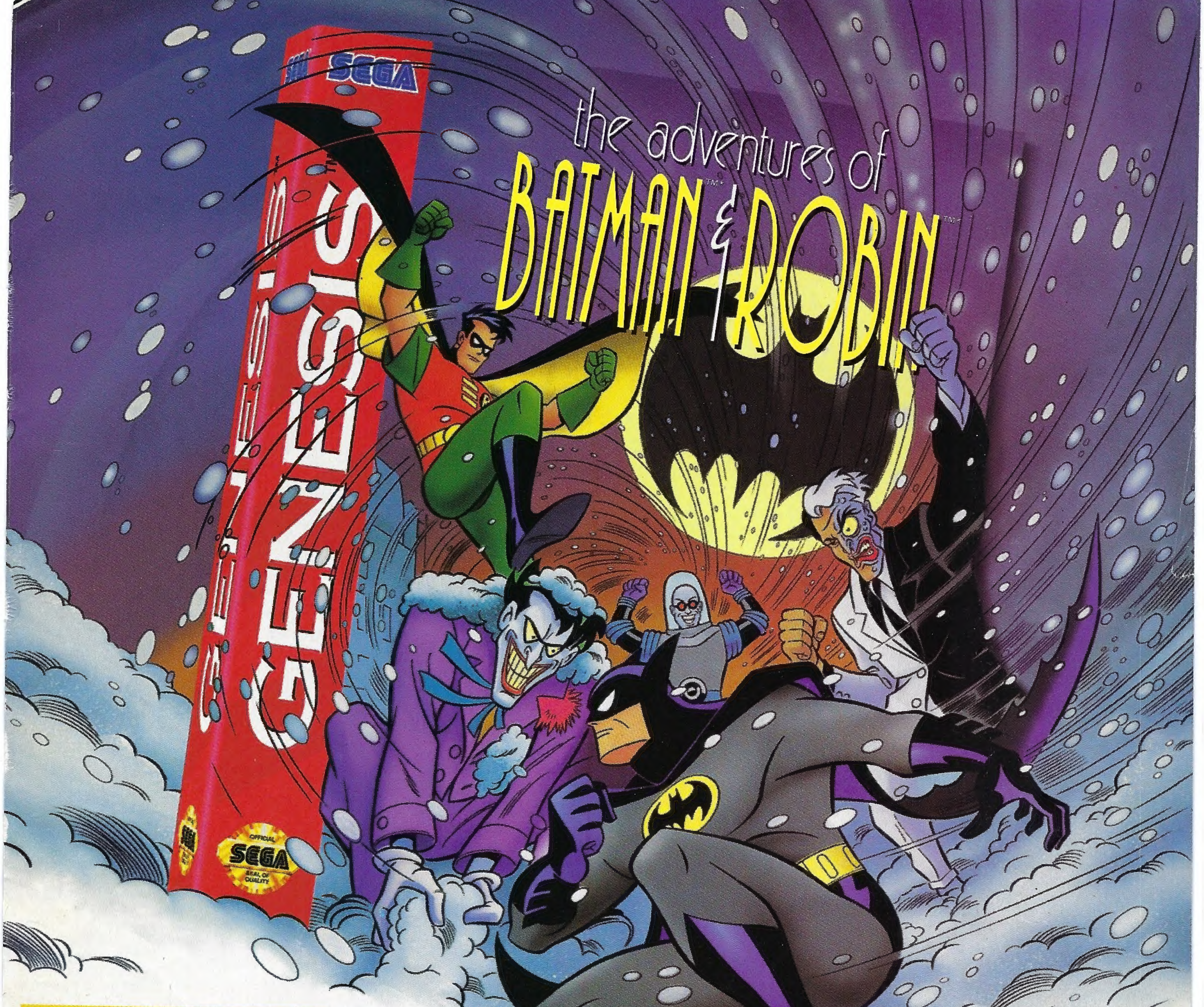
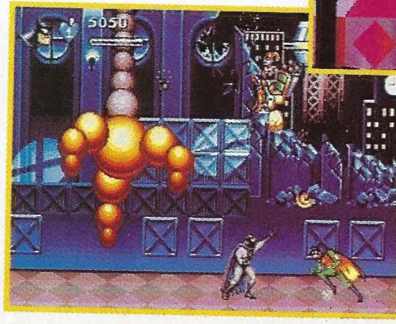


Feel the heat of the Knight! When *Mr. Freeze* puts *Gotham City* on ice, *Batman* and *Robin* answer the call. With a mix of sharp-shooting and intense action, it's like two games in one!

Go ballistic! Battle huge bosses including *The Joker, Mad Hatter, Two-Face* and the chilling *Mr. Freeze* before *Gotham City* becomes Ice Cube Central!



Enter a new dimension! Awesome original animation lets you run a gauntlet of 3-D rotating and scaling sprites... then team up and double the intensity in 2-player mode!

Madness marches on!
Exploding rabbits, terrorist teacups and killer coffee pots mean *Mad Hatter's* cupboard is full–and you better watch your back before you get done in by another nasty knickknack!

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DOOM cover art (newsstand edition) by Kevin Walker, color by J.J. Abbott/Brimstone
HELLBOY/ASH cover art (direct market edition) by Mike Mignola, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, color by Rueben Rude/Digital Chameleon

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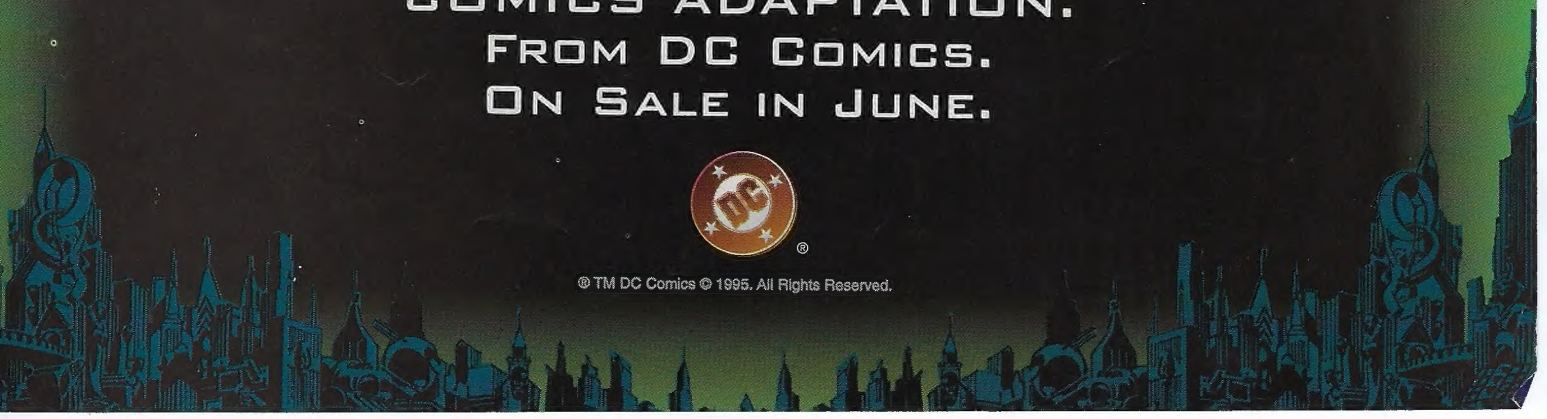
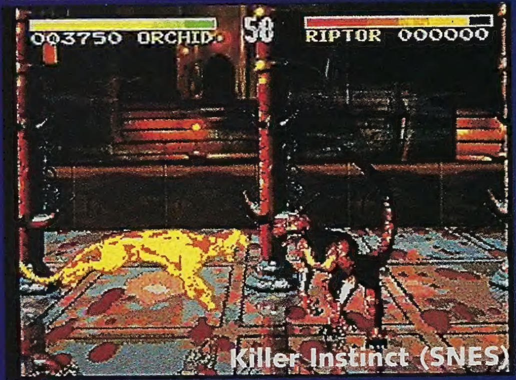


the E3 report

FLUX attends monster convention and gets glimpse of the future of video games.

Game companies of all sizes were at the recent Electronic EntertainmentExpo in LA showcasing their new games and products for systems like the Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation and 3DO—and FLUX was there to cover all the action. Here's what we saw: **SEGA:** *Virtua Fighter* for 32X, although still in its infant stages, looked quite impressive. Front-to-back movement (in addition to left-to-right) is a possibility Sega is considering....*Virtua Fighter Remix* for the Saturn features *VF2's* costumes and backgrounds with the characters from *VF*. A strange concept, but it definitely works....*Wolverine* for 32X, also very early in development, featured one of the largest and best-looking superhero characters in gaming history. Could be a winner....**NINTENDO:** With the Ultra 64 now not seeing daylight until next spring, Nintendo came out fighting nevertheless with *Killer Instinct* for the Super Nintendo. In a word, awesome! Makes you wonder why anyone would need an Ultra system, even at the proposed $250 price point....*Donkey Kong Country 2* (due Xmas) is more of the same, and that's a good thing....And of course, there was the Virtual Boy inflicting eye damage on all those stupid enough to want to stick their face in a TV. Thanks, Nintendo, but no....**ELECTRONIC ARTS:** *Road Rash* for PlayStation looked excellent, though no better than the 3DO version....*NHL '96* for 3DO, while not quite as impressive as *FIFA*, promises to be an important sports title for the struggling system...*Need For Speed* for the PC had the same breathtaking visual appeal as the 3DO version, and yet still lacked the speed!...**KONAMI:** Look for them to bring *Run & Gun* to the SNES under a different name (thanks to the NBA license)....**SONY:** While the Sega Saturn may have the advantage of already being available, it's clear now that the Sony PlayStation has a definite edge when it comes to software. *Toh Shin Den* (under its American name, *Battle Arena Toshinden*) rocks *Virtua Fighter*, and *Ridge Racer* takes the checkered flag over *Daytona* and *Virtua Racing*. Plus, Sony has the exclusive license for MK3 over any 32-bit system—and on the PlayStation, MK3 truly smokes. At $299 and the best software of any next gen system, the PlayStation should be worth the wait....**ACCLAIM:** The big boys who brought *Mortal Kombat* and *NBA Jam* home have gone licensing crazy: *Cutthroat Island*, *Judge Dredd*, *Frank Thomas*, *Batman Forever*—games for virtually all systems, none of which looked particularly impressive....*NBA Jam TE* for PlayStation and *Robotica* for the Saturn (3D *DOOM*-like shooter) were the best of the Acclaim lot....**SONY IMAGESOFT:** The kings of bad Sega CD games have finally produced something of note: *Twisted Metal* for the PlayStation is a thrilling 3D demolition derby/car shooter. Jump ramps, crash into your opponents (ice cream trucks, taxi cabs, etc.) or blast 'em to bits, all in a fully explorable environment (i.e. no track!). A definite winner....**ATARI:** Atari had their forthcoming Jaguar VR glasses on display, except that the featured program, *Zone Hunter*, wasn't running off an actual Jag system....*Defender 2000* for the Jag seemed impressive enough, as did a few CD games, but that was about it. From the looks of things, the cat is on its last legs....

Nintendo's Ultra 64



Killer Instinct (SNES)

FLUX
ISSUE #5

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FLUX is published quarterly by Harris Publications, Inc., 1115 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10010. Single copy price $4.50 in U.S. and $4.95 in Canada. Submission of manuscripts, illustrations and/or photographs must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials.
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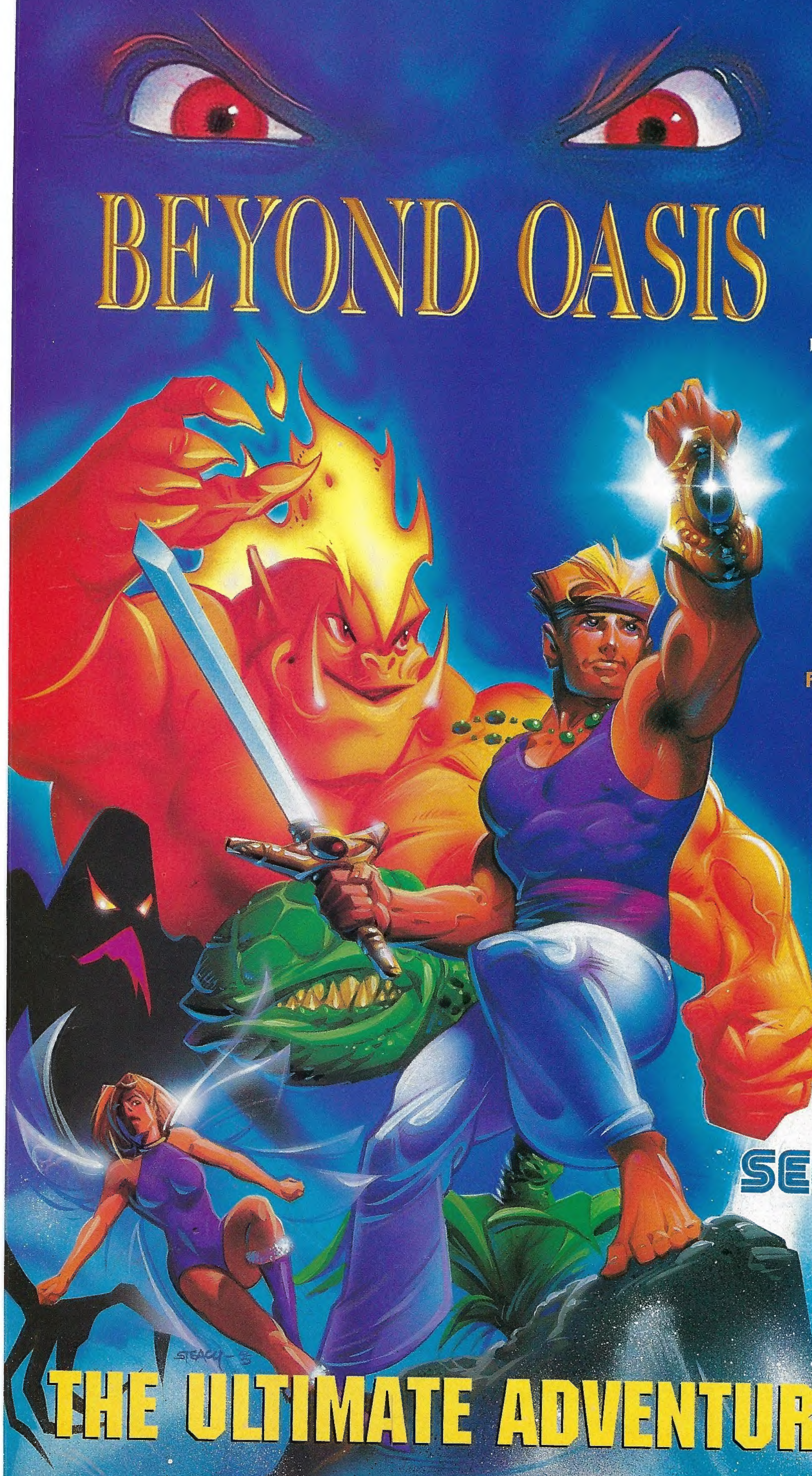
PRINTED IN U.S.A. ISSN #1074-5602

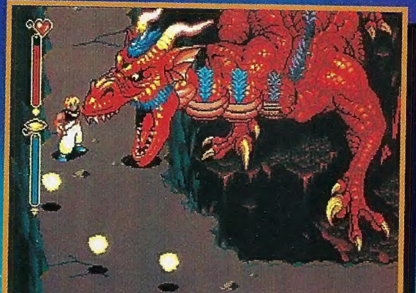
BEYOND OASIS

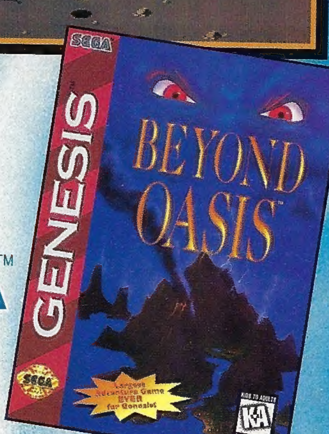


BLOB OUT! Make short order of bilious blobs and evil trolls with Prince Ali's weapons, punches and kicks – or dig deeper to discover *HIDDEN SECRET MOVES* – a SEGA™ first!

ROCK ON! You'll need more than sticks and stones to battle the Rock Boss. Count on the four Wild Spirits to back you up – especially the superhot Efreet the Fire Spirit!

FIRE UP! Wrap your brain around mind-boggling puzzles that lead to close encounters of the fire-breathing kind – then save up to 4 games with battery back-up!

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THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE AWAITS!

backlash

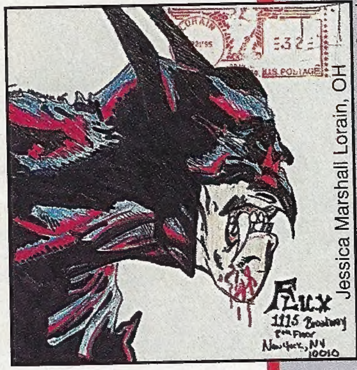
OK, OK, you've had your fun. Joke's over, people. I dunno how many people you've brainwashed into believing the crap you put out, but I'm not fooled. For starters, let's look at your "Top 100 Video Games Of All Time" list [*issue #4*]. *Space Invaders* over *DOOM*? Wrong! *Pac-Man* and *Asteroids* over *Street Fighter II*? Wrong! *Centipede* over *Donkey Kong Country*? Major wrong! Face it, you blew it.

Secondly, there's the way you're calling yourself a "dude" mag. The term "dude" hasn't been thought of as "cool" (to speak your language) since there were cowboys and indians! Get with the program.

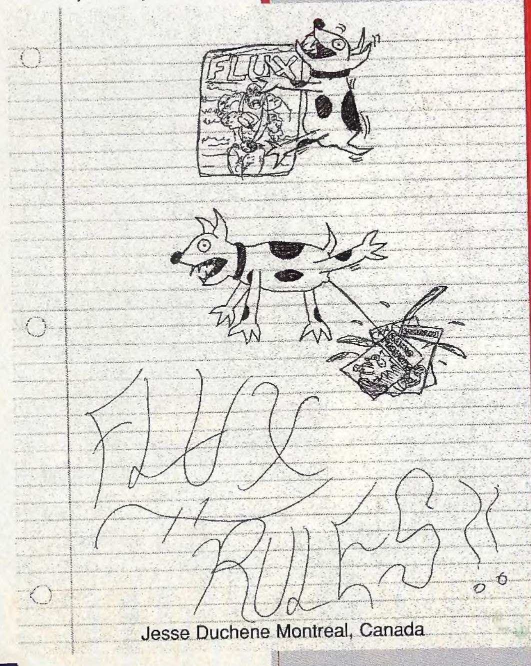
Finally, the term "'zine" is an abbreviation for fanzine, which you are not. You have ads, print full color and charge $4.50 per ish. In my opinion, calling yourself a 'zine is a blatant lie to the public.

Hugs and kisses. Burn in hell.

—JONATHAN E. BAILEY
via Internet



Jessica Marshall Lorain, OH



Jesse Duchene Montreal, Canada

Hey, man, what's up with the chicks not liking Babewatch? I'm a chick and I like Babewatch. I've even got a few suggestions: Stephanie Seymour. Skinny as a wormy cow, but those lips, those eyes! Anyway, keep up the X-cellent work. Video games, comics, music—everything God intended. How about guns?

—RED SONJA

I love the fact that you guys print whatever the hell you want.

—Jason "Ermac" Stoddard
via Internet

Get A GriP
lethal weapONS
Too much for my 12yr. old son ——

FLUX kicks ass, but it needs more cuss-words and naked chicks.

—KENNY KETNER
via Internet

Tomcat Alley as one of your best of all time? It's my pick for the *worst* game of all time. And I would have added *Shockwave* (3DO), *Daytona* (arcade) and *TIE Fighter* (PC).

—TODD A. HARGOSH
via Internet

To the "female FLUX reader" [*Backlash, issue #3*]: Are you an idiot? FLUX is not about to start running a Studwatch with pictures of nude guys. The minute they did, the 99% of its readership who happen to be heterosexual male would gag and barf up a spleen. But don't fret, I'm sure that soon after hell freezes over, the Politically Correct FLUX will be published. Yeah.... And Gretchen *does* rule! I would say that she definitely doesn't suck.

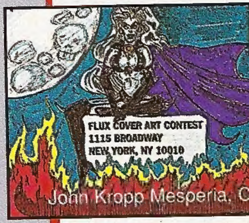
—BEEFY
Waco, TX

At long last my search for a magazine that satisfies the tastes of axe-totin' maniacs is over. It's great that you can print what guys want to see without worrying about upsetting some feminist who wants to put an end to your mag.

—KRIS CARSON
Oakville, Ontario, Canada

I can remember being enthralled by the greatest magazine ever—FLUX—about a year ago. Now, four issues later, FLUX has given me a fake ID, a fake doctor's note, a fake report card that got me out of a lot of crap (for about a week, then the mail-home copy came) and an issue with big boobs on the cover (convenient comic-sized edition). Now we have posers everywhere reading FLUX, and I'm sorry to say that all the coolness is now gone (so stop reading you posers!). But that's okay. Just keep putting good looking chicks in the Babewatch section (hint: Anna Nicole Smith) and I'll be satisfied.

—USMANGA2
via Internet



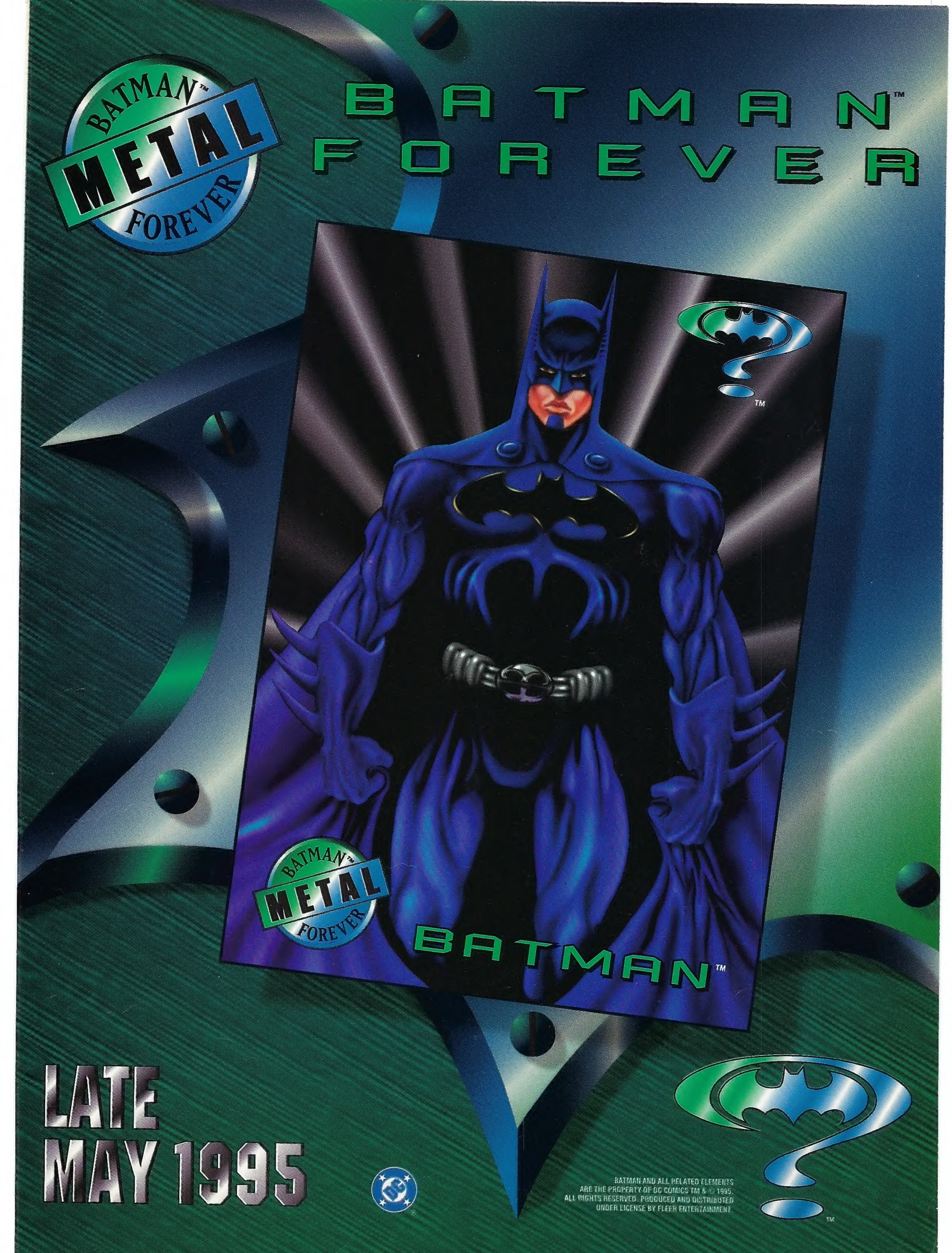
John Kropp Mesperia, CA

FLUXMAN is dead. Long Live The FLUX-DOG!!!!

—ADAM TOOL
via Internet

It's good to know that evolution, even in gaming magazines, really exists. I do hope the editors of EGM and GamePro don't have too hard a time getting used to standing in line at the unemployment office. Do I smell a Pulizter on the way...oh, never mind. That's just my dinner burning.

KEYZ
keyz@aol.com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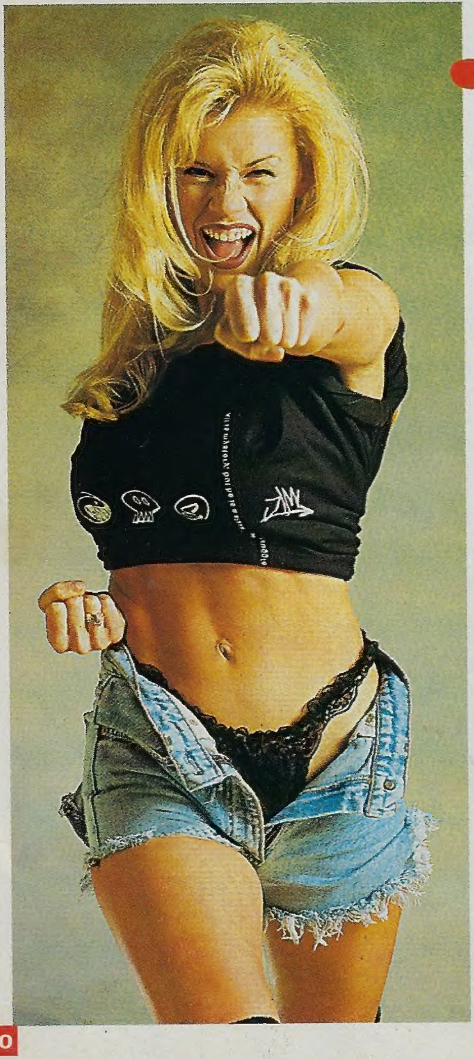
Static

stuff that doesn't suck

BABALITY

Leg grabs, skimpy outfits, Kisses of Death—it's all in a day's work for Mortal Kombat 3's Kerri Hoskins

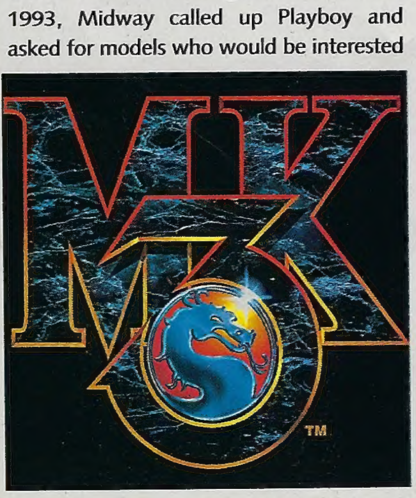


Talk about your happy accidents. Minnesota-born model/megababe Kerri Hoskins was originally on her way to a degree in animal health in the late Eighties before her sister Jody almost inadvertently gave her a start in modeling.

"I used to tag along on her photo shoots and watch her work. Eventually, she and the photographers invited me to give it a try."

Six years later, Kerri has appeared in a number of national magazines; she and Jody have posed nude together for Playboy.

Obviously, this isn't how most people break into the video game business. In 1993, Midway called up Playboy and asked for models who would be interested



Photos by Tom Maday

KERRI HOSKINS AS *MK3*'S SONYA

in performing "light stunt work" on a new arcade game called *NBA Jam*, and Kerri's name came up. As a cheerleader in the attract mode and on the sidelines, she was a colossal hit—and that gig landed her the role of Helga, the main boss in the Aerosmith arcade game *Revolution X* (as well as the club's cage dancers and the groupie in Steven Tyler's arms). But it's her current gig as Sonya in *Mortal Kombat 3* that's making Kerri Hoskins a household name among gamers.

"When they asked if I wanted to play Sonya, I jumped at the chance," says Hoskins. "It's a lot of fun working with Midway. They're my favorite people to work for."

Her training in boxing and wrestling has helped her make the punches look real, but how's her performance on the other side of the video game screen?

"I don't play games that often, and I'm not too good. I'm getting better, though; every trade show we go to, I always sneak in some practice time on the machines when nobody's around."

—DAN AMRICH

fluxclusive!

VIRTUAL REALITY

Give NaSCaR Racing a turbo boost with the Virtual Pilot Pro and Pro Pedals

While Papyrus' *NASCAR Racing* CD-ROM is unquestionably the most thrilling and realistic auto racing sim on the market, the truth is that neither the keyboard, joypad or flight stick-style controller does the game justice. To run with the big boys of the NASCAR circuit like Sterling Marlin and Jeff Gordon, you need the most authentic method of car control available—and that's CH Products' Virtual Pilot Pro and Pro Pedals. The Virtual Pilot Pro ($139.00) is perfect for both auto racing games and flight sims as it doubles as a steering wheel and airplane yoke. The Pilot features desktop mounting and includes six fire buttons, two four-way switches, elevator and trim controls and a throttle. But if you want the ultimate in realism and control, invest in the Pro Pedals (also $139.00) as well. Like the Pilot Pro, the Pro Pedals are ideal for both auto racing and flight sims, as they offer up/down pivot movement (for use as rudder and toe brakes) and forward/backward pedal motion (for acceleration/braking). Attach them together, then into the joystick port of your PC, and you'll be ready to drive—or fly—like a Pro.—**JEFF KITTS**

static

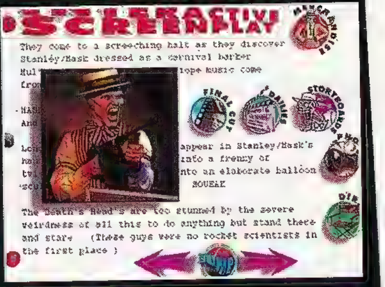
stuff that doesn't suck

DON'T DO THIS

Never take those little bouillon cubes used to make soup and put them in someone's shower head. An unexpected broth bath first thing in the morning can be a real drag.

MASK APPEAL

Now that the video version of *The Mask* has found its way into America's homes, PC and Mac users can fire up *Behind The Mask*, a truly ssssmokin' CD-ROM stuffed with all kinds of clips, sounds, secrets and lost scenes from the megahit Jim Carrey flick. Gasp in amazement at 25 minutes of film footage, including a never-before-seen sequence that explains how the Mask got to Edge City! Investigate the project's history, from Dark Horse comic book to New Line Cinema blockbuster to CBS Saturday morning cartoon show! Be dazzled as you see how they made Carrey's eyes bug out! Thrill to 75 audio samples! Click through the interactive screenplay! Drool over sexy Cameron Diaz and her huge, um, biography! *Behind The Mask* should be interacting with store shelves now. —**DAN AMRICH**

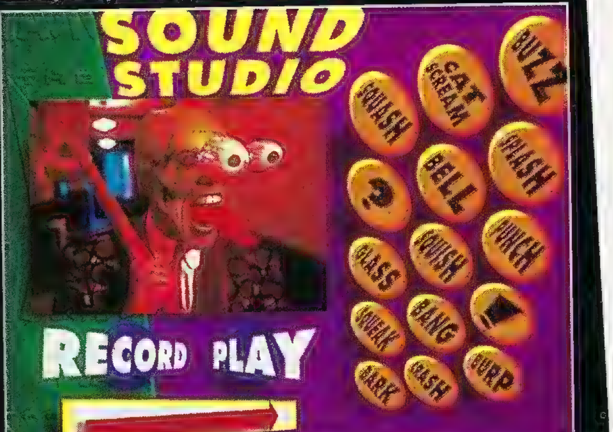


They come to a screeching halt as they discover Stanley/Mask dressed as a carnival barker
Hul ... lope music come
fro

- MAS
And

Lo ... appear in Stanley/Mask's
ha ... into a frenzy of
tw ... nto an elaborate balloon
scu ... SQUEAK

The Death's Head's are too stunned by the severe weirdness of all this to do anything but stand there and stare (These guys were no rocket scientists in the first place)



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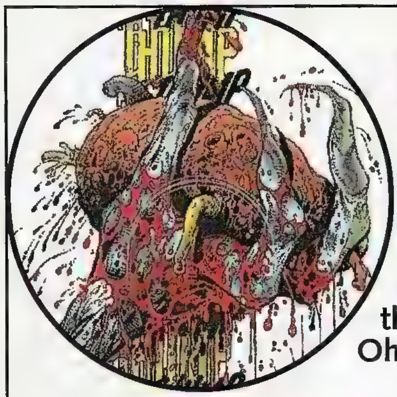
#7
MK3. The Arcade Game.

The night has
a thousand eyes,
And the day
but one;
Yet the light
of the bright
world dies,
With the dying sun.

-Bourdillon



BOGUS POG OF THE MONTH

9
The Beeding Heart
SPAWN
SPOGZ
ECLIPSE
Spawn ™ and © 1993 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc.

Pog #9—I'm sorry, SPOG #9—in Eclipse's Spawn Spogz set brings us this great "my heart is in my hand" image ruined by a brain-dead typo. What the hell's it supposed to be? Bleeding? Beating? Breeding? Oh, I know—proof-reading. That's gotta be it.

Static

stuff that doesn't suck

DON'T DO THIS

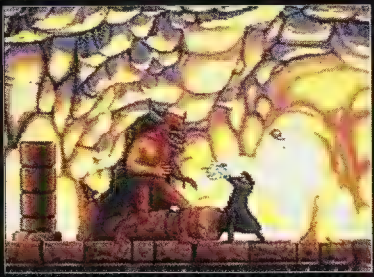
Never go to the pet store and buy a packet of Methylene Blue (a chemical used to kill aquarium fungus). And whatever you do, don't take any of it and slip it in someone's drink (preferably something dark, like Coke). They'll be pissin' blue for hours.

MAC CLASSIC

Been searching the classifieds for an old, beat-up *Defender* coin-op? Would you give anything to have a *Joust* upright positioned neatly in the corner of your room? Well, veteran arcade-goers, the Digital Eclipse Software company has answered your prayers—and it won't cost you more than the price of bargain-bin software. In conjunction with Williams Entertainment, Digital Eclipse now offers three all-time great arcade games for Macintosh (with PC soon to follow): *Defender*, the awesome side-scrolling space shooter; *Joust*, the great bird-against-bird prehistoric air war; and *Robotron 2084*, the manic, two-fisted firefight. But these aren't new versions or modern translations of the coin-op classics—no, these are exact port-overs from the original games with even the most minute detail in tact. And if that weren't enough, Digital Eclipse scores extra points for packaging each game in cardboard boxes shaped like the classic coin-ops themselves. For fans of nostalgia gaming, this is the ultimate collection.

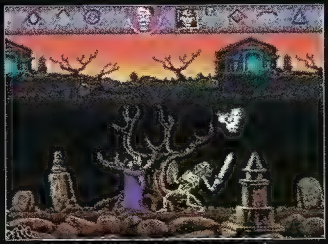
—JEFF KITTS

ENDER
JOUST
JOUST
ROBO

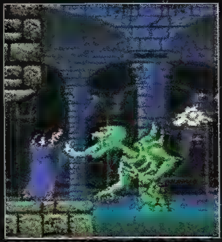


ONE MUST BE OF PURE MIND AND HEART TO VANQUISH THE WARLOCK'S EVIL MASTER!

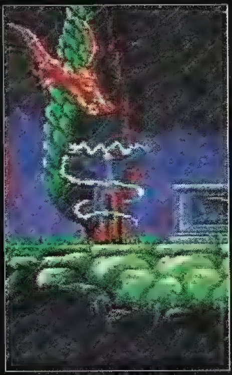
"Magical pick-ups and ancestral spells unleash chaotic fury!"



DEFEAT THE UNDEAD AND YE SHALL BE ALLOWED TO PASS!

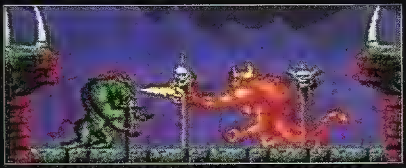


BEWARE DEMONS DEEP WITHIN THE DUNGEON'S BOWELS!

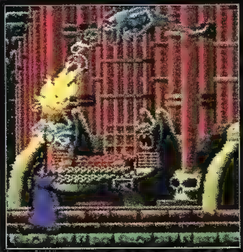


SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON MASTERING MANY SPELLS!

"Part strategy, part action! Warlock conjures an unbeatable spell!!!"



ENTER THE ARENA AND DO BATTLE AS A FIERCE MINOTAUR!



HAUNTING MELODIES STIR UNHOLY APPARITIONS!

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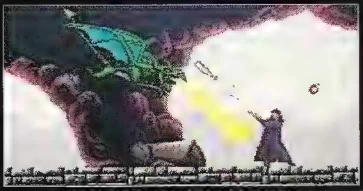
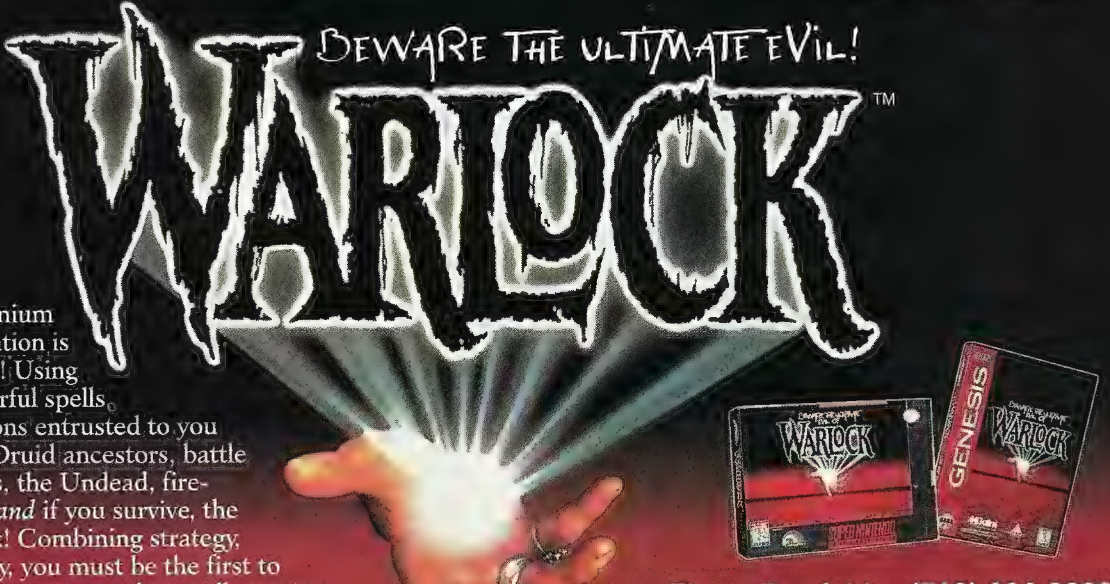


AVOID THE WINGED DRAGON'S FIERY BREATH!



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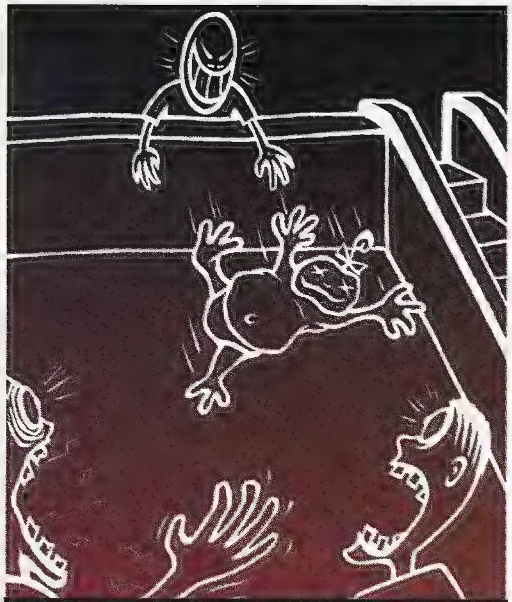
KICKIN' ASCII

ASCII, known for weighty, oversized SNES joysticks, debuted two new joysticks for the Sony PlayStation at the E3 convention. Both the Ascii Pad PS and Fighter Stick PS feature an eight-button layout and look that complements the PlayStation unit. The Ascii Pad PS offers a hand-molded grip that fits comfortably in the user's paw, and the hulking Fighter Stick PS simulates the layout and handling of an actual arcade coin-op. Both include slow motion, turbo, auto turbo and independent turbo switches, and Ascii plans to issue each controller simultaneously with the PlayStation's release this fall.



DON'T DO THIS

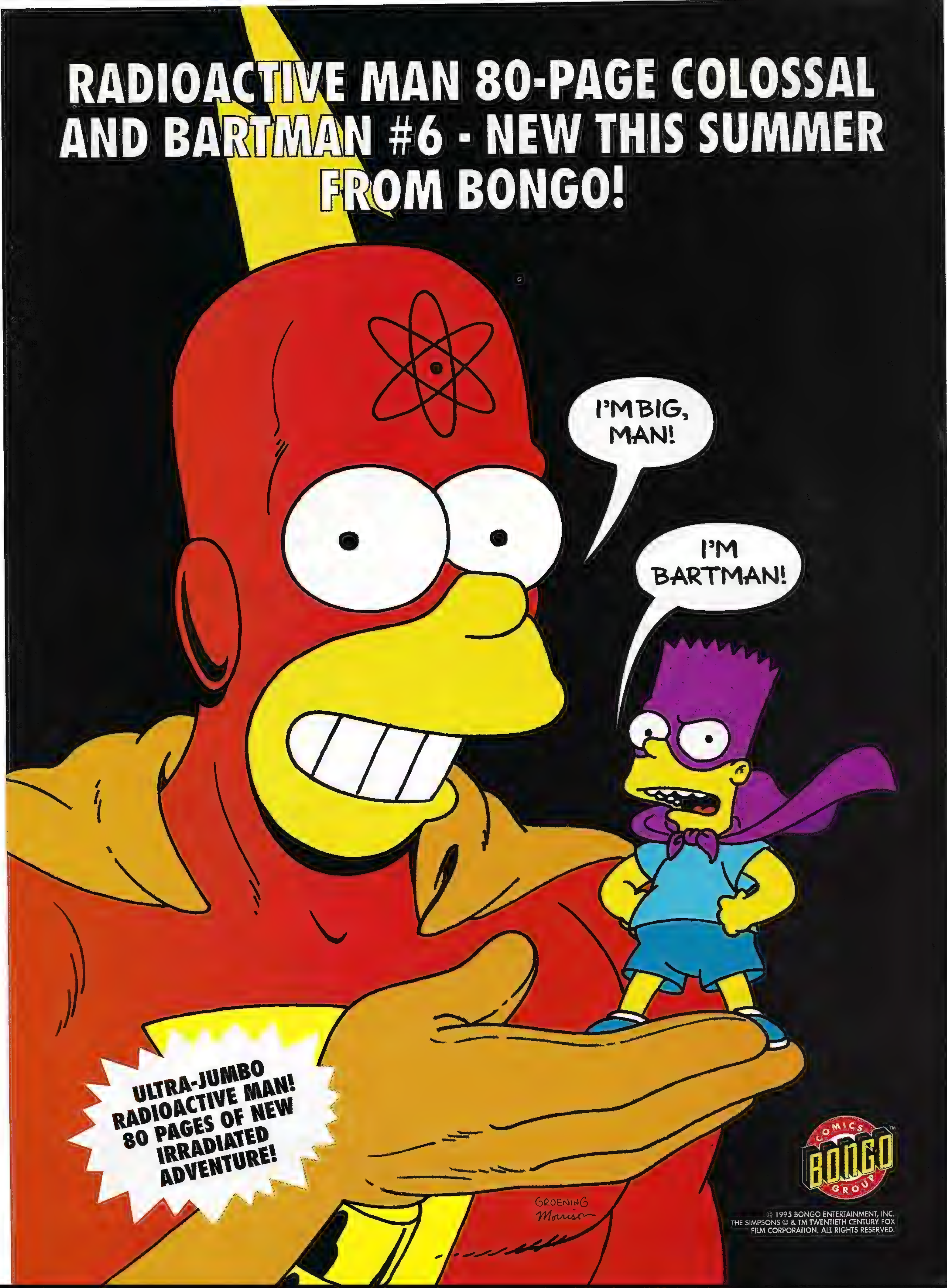
Never get one of those realistic-looking rubber baby dolls and drop it from the top floor of a mall. People tend to freak out when they see a little baby plummeting to its death.

TOYS'R'JIM

Gaming's hottest spineless hero is ready to conquer more than the 16-bit platforms—Earthworm Jim will be appearing both on TV in his own WB Network cartoon series and in toy stores this fall. Playmates, manufacturers of the *Earthworm Jim* video games and toy lines for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Skeleton Warriors and WildC.A.T.s, will be issuing 10 *Jim*-related action figures in August, including three different Jims, Professor Monkey-For-A-Head, Princess What's—Her-Name and Evil the Cat. Later in the fall, look for vehicles like the Pocket Rocket and a full-sized replica of Jim's trusty sidearm, the Plasma Blaster. And the 20" plush Jim with posable legs and removable head is sure to make gamers everywhere feel worm and fuzzy.
—DAN AMRICH

BABEWATCH!

Nikki Cox from *Unhappily Ever After.* Courtesy of the WB Network.



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hell & DOOM

It's been called the greatest game of all time. Now DOOM is about to become one of the most successful franchises in gaming history. FLUX goes straight to the source—id software's top dog Jay Wilbur—to get the inside scoop on the DOOM phenomenon.

NATION

By Dan Amrich & Jeff Kitts

It was December of 1993. id Software's record-shattering, standard-setting, world-dominating first-person action shooter *DOOM* was released with about as much hype and fanfare as a piece of free software can get. Screen shots had been available for months through the Internet, and discussions of the game's merits cropped up long before a final version ever reached a gamer's hard drive. A pre-release test version of *DOOM* was unintentionally leaked to the public through the net, causing id much distress but only fanning the fires. And faster than you could say "I'll be damned if I'm going to register a piece of shareware," the country was hooked on *DOOM*'s heady mix of demons, bloodlust, carnage, heavy weaponry, isolation and heart-racing fear. PC owners downloaded the game by the millions, eagerly stepping into the desperate shoes of a lone space Marine fighting off a seemingly endless onslaught of demons from Hell in a terrifying you-are-there 3D environment. And just like that, the software company with the smallest name suddenly had the biggest profits.

A year and a half later, the killer app that is *DOOM* and its sequel *DOOM II* have spread beyond their original PC platform to infect the Jaguar, 32X, Macintosh and, soon, 3DO, Saturn, PlayStation and Ultra 64 platforms. id wisely made the source code for *DOOM* available to the public on the net, allowing fans to create their own levels; and now an entire subculture has blossomed based solely on custom file patches, replacement sound effects, game editors and new .WADs containing devious new levels to explore. Enterprising small software publishers have collected hundreds of these homemade customizations into CD-ROMs like *Toolkit For DOOM*, *The DOOM Companion* and *D!ZONE*. While the bulk of their public-created content is available for free download from the Internet, these compilations consistently chart among the best-sellers. A *DOOM II* screen saver has just been released for Windows and a feature film is in the works. Plus, id's programmers and designers are hard at work on a new project, codenamed *Quake*, which promises to shake up the gaming industry even more than *DOOM* did.

Now, with *DOOM* firmly in place as an institution, id head honcho Jay Wilbur talks to FLUX about how *DOOM* came to be and what the future still holds for the world's most terrifying action game.

FLUX: When *DOOM* was in its embryonic stages, did you ever think it would have such a tremendous impact on the gaming community?

JAY WILBUR: No. It eventually hit us upside the head like a hammer. First and foremost, everybody here at id Software is a game fanatic. So when we saw *DOOM*, we said, "Wow, this is a really good game," just like every other game player did once they saw it. And we never even expected it to hit cult status. Now, the game's beyond cult status—it's sort of like an icon for the era. But no, we had no idea—although we're certainly delighted.

FLUX: When did it really start to dawn on you that *DOOM* was immense—was it out of the blue, or was it a slow build over time?

WILBUR: Well, there's an interesting story about the day we released *DOOM*—December 10, 1993. We told everyone that it would be released to the Internet on December 10, and that the first place it would be available was the University of Wisconsin's

DOOM

FTP site. So midnight on the 10th, the maximum load of FTP users logged onto the site and sat there. I couldn't even log on to upload the game. Apparently about a thousand people were also gathered in the IRC *DOOM* channel, saying "It's not here yet, it's not here yet." So I called Dave, the sysop over at the University, and he increased the load by 50 people so I could get on. I typed all my information in and when he said "Go!" I hit enter. It was at 150 users, and he's rapidly counting off to me..."150, 155, 160, 175, 190, 200." It was that fast. I barely got in. Eventually we had to kick everybody off because it was such slow going. But everybody was cool about being knocked off, because they knew what was going on. Finally, I finished the upload and logged off. They opened the floodgates and instantly, thousands of people logged onto the University's FTP site at once. It crashed the University of Wisconsin's computers, campus-wide! At that point I was still on the phone to Dave, and he said, "I've never seen anything like this. I gotta go," and hung up. He got the network back on, and it happened *again*. At that point, we knew we were onto something kind of big.

"The original title for DOOM was "It's Green And Pissed." It had a different sort of twist—it wasn't demons from Hell, it was aliens from some distant planet as the foe."
—Jay Wilbur, id Software

After that, I guess it was the way the press hit us, and the way the users embraced the game. It was everything. *DOOM* didn't take a slow ride up—it was just like someone put a rocket underneath it and lit it up. And it just *flew*.

FLUX: I understand that *DOOM* has been banned at some colleges and in some businesses because it's too addicting.

WILBUR: Yeah, we've heard stories of colleges banning the game, and large corporations like Microsoft and Novell...we've had to ban *DOOM* in our *own* office, because we were too busy, ahem, "testing" the game. There was probably a couple-month period where absolutely diddly got done around here because we were all playing the game.

FLUX: Why do you think *DOOM* is frequently hailed as "the greatest game ever?" Does it have more to do with the game's technical innovations or the overall feel or vibe of the game?

WILBUR: Yes and yes. I think that in *DOOM*, all of the pieces of the puzzle are perfectly laid into place. The technology is just *perfect*. The graphics, the vibe, if you will, the feeling of the game, is perfect. The multiplayer aspect—which, of course, is part of the technology, but deserves to be talked about in a separate light—is perfect. The marketing angle was perfect. Every piece of the puzzle was perfectly laid into place.

FLUX: How long did it take to get each of those elements to be perfect? How long was *DOOM* in development?

WILBUR: About a year. There were six people working on it for one year.

FLUX: Who was the person who originally hatched the idea for *DOOM*—the one who came in and said, "I had this great nightmare last night and I want to make it into a game?"

WILBUR: Well, the way it works here is that one person—John Carmack, who's the president of id as well as the head technical guru—develops technology. Then he comes to the group and says, "I have this technology. This technology will do A, B, C, D, X, Y, Z." And then we all sit down as a group and say, "Gee, it'd be really cool if we made this technology do this kind of a game." But there really wasn't this one person who said, "I have this great idea for a game." It was more of an evolutionary thing.

The original title for *DOOM* was "It's Green And Pissed." It had a different sort of twist—it wasn't demons from Hell, it was aliens from some distant planet as the foe. That all sort of evolved over time. Unlike most game companies, who normally design some sort of a game spec, a bible if you will, about how the game is going to be produced long before it actually is, we fly by the seat of our pants—we'll put a giant wish list together of "gee whiz" things, and let time and technology cull it out.

FLUX: How many people were involved in making decisions for *DOOM*?

WILBUR: There were six of us here when we did *DOOM*, but the company now has 11 people.

FLUX: Are all decisions about game elements made in-house, or do you test games with outside people, like focus groups?

WILBUR: Well, we've been on the net since long before being on the net was in vogue. So after *Wolfenstein 3-D* was released, we were discussing our next projects and people on the net were inundating us with their own wish lists. While we did go out and say, "Wouldn't it be cool if we did this?," we tend to keep that stuff close to home. Originally, in *DOOM*, you were going to be able to mark the walls—if you shot a wall, you'd see bullet holes. Time and technology proved that it was useless for the game—it did absolutely nothing for the gameplay and it made the saved game files unreasonably large. It was a stupid thing and it didn't need to be in the game, so bang, it was ejected. And that's sort of how we go about doing the game. We basically say, “Hey, is this cool? Does it make the game better?” If the answer is yes, that item stays.

So the pockmarks on the walls never made it in the game—but we had released information that it would be. A couple of people came back to us and said, “Why isn't it in the game? You're screwing us!” But the reality is, if those holes were in there, you'd never look at it—any action game where you have to take the time to look at the walls is *stupid*. People are praising a game that's out there now because of its higher resolution—claiming that when you put your face into the wall in *DOOM*, it gets blocky. Well, any game where you have the time to put your face into the wall is a bad game! [*laughs*] If you've taken the time to look at a game at that level, you're probably not having a whole lot of fun.

But as for taking suggestions from people off the net, we do and we did. We read every single message. Very few of the suggestions made it into the game, but indeed some did. In multiplayer, we originally were not going to have the ability to talk back and forth. Somebody suggested it, and it made it into the game. On that same idea, when we said it would be in the game, someone else said, “Why don't you have pre-defined macros?” And we reviewed that and it also made it into the game. Some fine netster can pat himself on the back for that one. Of course, there were just absolutely tons of things that didn't make it into the game—I'd say that a smidgen of a percentage actually got used.

FLUX: Were any of those suggestions used in *DOOM II*?

WILBUR: No. In *DOOM II*, our path was really clear; we knew where we wanted to go with it. *DOOM II* was an advancement in content, not in technology. We didn't want to play games with the proven winner. It wasn't broken—so why fix it?

FLUX: Since *DOOM* came out, the first-person action genre has exploded. How do you feel about this?

WILBUR: Well, it's the sincerest form of flattery, I guess.... [*laughs*]

FLUX: A number of them have gone out of their way to compare themselves to *DOOM* or to claim superiority to *DOOM*. Are things in the world of game publishing really as competitive as they seem to make it?

WILBUR: Well, let me put it this way: when you make it to the number one spot, they hand you a trophy and a bull's-eye T-shirt. And we're all wearin' the shirt right now. It could be worse—they could all *not* be taking shots at us right now, which would mean we weren't number one.

We were recently asked about LucasArts' *Dark Forces*—it's a first-person perspective game, and it's really good. We played it, and we're duly impressed. But when it first came out, people were saying to us, “Oh, it's so much like *DOOM*, you gotta yell at them, it's reverse-engineered” or whatever. And when you think about it, almost any article that's going to be written about that game is going to have the words “LucasArts,” “*Star Wars*,” “*DOOM*” and “id Software” in the same sentence. So that's okay. [*laughs*]

FLUX: What's your take on the add-on disks, like the *D!* shell and all these small-time publishers selling home-grown *DOOM* levels? What about the *DOOM* fans who make their own levels and make them available on the Internet?

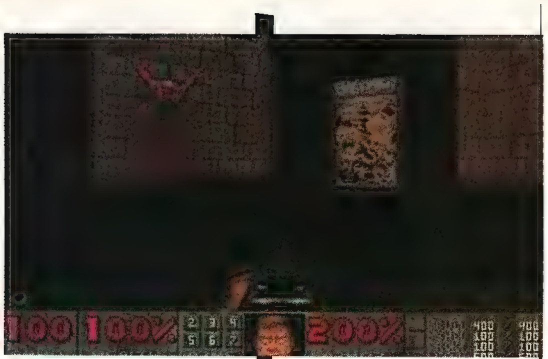
WILBUR: Well, there's two levels to that question: How do we feel about the users creating their own levels and passing them around? We're absolutely delighted—that shows that people are so into the game that now they're willing to add some of their own personal touches to it. That delights us to no end. The collections of levels for sale—the *DOOMWare*, the *DOOM Companion*, the *DOOM* this and the *DOOM* that—we're taken a little aback by those who are illegally using our trademarks, logos and copyrighted material for the gain of a product that is not ours. And as far as we're concerned, that is illegal and it violates federal trademark and copyright protections. And we're pursuing them. Quite frankly, I'm shocked. I mean, you know what 99% of them are—they're levels that somebody shoveled off the Internet and threw onto a disk. Basically, these people are making money off of something that's available for free everywhere.

FLUX: How do you feel about the recent Jaguar, 32X and 3DO coversions of *DOOM*?

WILBUR: We have approval over everything. Nothing hits the street until we sign off on it, and we're delighted with all of them. There are some, of course, just because of the technology of the hardware, that are a little better than the others, but we do have approval over all of 'em.

FLUX: Are there any plans of *DOOM II* conversions for those same systems?

WILBUR: Right now we want to see how the first game fares in the marketplace, but we're talking with Sega and Atari about the possibilities. If the 3DO version goes well, in fact, then we've already agreed to do *DOOM II* for 3DO. [DOOM *for 3DO (Art Data Interactive) will feature a never-before-seen fourth episode with nine all-new levels, new monsters, weapons, etc.—FLUX Ed.*] As we speak, we're



targeting some of the next generation machines—Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn—for both games, since they're CD-based and we can fit both titles on one disc. The Ultra 64 will actually get a new, unique version of *DOOM*. We'll call it *DOOM III* for lack of a better name.

FLUX: Why go exclusive with the Ultra 64?

WILBUR: Because Nintendo wants it. Nintendo is demanding, if you will, exclusivity for a certain amount of time for their platform. Which is fine; we're more than happy to do it and we've got a talented group working on it—Williams Entertainment. We couldn't be more delighted with the people who are doing the work.

FLUX: So whereas the Jaguar version featured the best of the PC levels, the Ultra 64 version is going to be something new, from scratch?

WILBUR: Yes. It will take advantage of the new hardware. There might be some new weapons, new monsters, new levels, new music, new sound effects. This is all either the God's honest truth or complete, utter lies—it's hard to say because so much is in development and we have so much changing. But it'll be new.

FLUX: *Wolfenstein 3-D* just came out for the Macintosh, and both *DOOM*s are hot on its heels. Now that the Power Macs have arrived and Apple is trying to push them to the gaming crowd, will future id games be released simultaneously for the Mac audience as well as the PC?

WILBUR: We are looking at it, but right now, no. The way we work is that we develop for a target platform, and that platform is MS-DOS, just by the sheer number of users. After the target platform is done and released, we will license out the other platforms for development by parties outside id.

FLUX: Tell us about the *DOOM* screen saver for Windows that was recently released.

WILBUR: That was kind of a group call. We all sat back and thought about it, and decided it was kind of cheesy. And then we said, "Ya know, we could really have some fun with this and do a good job." And the guys who developed it for us—Worldwide MicroTronics—had a lot of patience, because we are demanding pains in the asses. But they stuck with us and developed it just the way we wanted it.

And it's really funny! There are random things that will happen, and one of those things is a switch will pop up somewhere on the screen. Our Hero, the space marine, will either walk to it or teleport in next to it. And when it pulls the switch, random bad things will happen to him—he explodes, a pit will open underneath him, something crushes him. For the fireworks saver alone, it's absolutely worth it. The monsters are shot from the bottom of the screen. Then they explode into multiple monsters and stuff, and the final explosion—the flower, if you will—is blood, and then you'll hear a real corny, "Oooh! Ahhh!"

FLUX: We understand there are no real plans for a *DOOM III*.

WILBUR: No, there aren't.

FLUX: Is that a final decision? Are you closing the door on that, or is there a chance....

WILBUR: Well, we're moving on with our next project, *Quake*. We're such a small group that we don't have time to do parallel projects. So *Quake* is in, *DOOM* is...out.

FLUX: When was that decision made? You were obviously very willing to do a *DOOM II*.

THE SPIDER MASTERMIND

WILBUR: We knew before we started *DOOM* that there would be a *DOOM II*. The way it works is we release a game into the shareware marketplace, then we follow along into the retail marketplace, taking advantage of both markets. [*id previously did this with* Wolfenstein 3-D *and its retail sequel,* Spear Of Destiny—*FLUX Ed.*] And then we move on to the next project.

FLUX: Is it because you don't want to run *DOOM* into the ground?

WILBUR: The main reason is that we survive on new technology. And a new technology requires a facelift for the game. I mean, I'm sure we could pigeonhole it into the *DOOM* world somewhere, but like you said, we wouldn't want to beat it to death. So we've developed a new technology—the *Quake* technology—and we'll continue with that. But for gamers who still want more *DOOM*, there's the Ultra 64 and 3DO versions. Or grab an Internet FTP provider, log on to our FTP site and download some WADs. There are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of *DOOM* levels out there.

FLUX: What can you tell us about the *DOOM* movie?

WILBUR: Not much; it's in development right now. Draft 1 of the script has come and gone and my understanding is that the boys over at Northern Lights Entertainment—Ivan Reitman's production company—have taken their red pens to it, and the scriptwriter is back in his office writing the next draft.

The whole movie thing is sorta new to us. People always ask me,

> "Quake will make DOOM look like a walk in the Park."
>
> —Jay Wilbur, id Software

"When do you think we'll see the movie?" and I'm like, "Who the hell knows?"

FLUX: But you are directly involved with the process?

WILBUR: Oh yeah. We have a say in everything.

FLUX: Will it follow the plot of the game?

WILBUR: I don't know. The first draft of the script they kept in-house, because it was rough—all first drafts are, even first drafts of games. So we're waiting to see exactly what the second draft is like. We told them not to try to pigeonhole the movie too close to the game—we've seen that happen with other game movies and they have not been successful. *DOOM*'s plot is...well, I'm being generous when I say "thin." They're going to have to write a lot around it. I think that's one of the strengths of the *DOOM* story when it comes to the movie—there isn't a thick plot with a lot of intricate things going on that they have to try and write around. It's very loose, there's a plausible story—as thin as it is, it's there and plausible—and they just have to figure out a way to fill in the holes.

FLUX: *DOOM* right now is becoming quite commercialized, with the film and the translation to the new game platforms. Is there a danger to all the exposure?

WILBUR: Well, we do have a merchandising deal in place, but can it go too far and burn out? Yes. We maintain approvals over everything, so we won't *let* it burn out. But we certainly see that there's a desire for *DOOM* logo apparel—a hat, a T-shirt with the monsters on it, stuff like that. *DOOM* lunch boxes? *DOOM* demon-shaped lollipops? I don't know. Well, wait, maybe that *would* be good.... [*laughs*]

FLUX: It's probably not unfair to say that *DOOM* has had the same kind of fan impact in the gaming world as *Star Wars* had in the movies—there are enough people who are fanatic about it that you probably *could* do *DOOM* lunch boxes and *DOOM* action figures and be successful.

WILBUR: I think that the demographics are different. When you just get down and look at the audience, *Star Wars* had a wider appeal. I mean, I have a little boy who likes to play *DOOM*. He prefers to play the *Magic School Bus* games, but he'll sit on my lap while I'm playing *DOOM* and he enjoys it. But the reality is, *DOOM* appeals to a much older crowd than something like *Star Wars*. Later on, they added things like the Ewoks that specifically appealed to a younger crew—but there's none of that in *DOOM*. [*laughs*] But actually, figures are in discussion—probably more collectibles as opposed to your G.I. Joe-type Hasbro or Mattel things.

FLUX: What, if anything, can you tell us about *Quake*?

WILBUR: Well, anything I tell you today could be a complete lie tomorrow, because things are changing so rapidly. In all of our games, we take what we learn from the past and we amplify the bitchin' stuff. Let's take *Wolfenstein* to *DOOM*. In *Wolfenstein*, we had that smooth-scrolling, 3-D world and we saw that it worked. So we enhanced the 3-D world and cut our teeth on the multiplayer option. Now, what we'll do with *Quake* is continue to make it realistic and enhance that 3-D world, making it true 3-D—in *DOOM*, the environment is actually 2-D. You never have a room on top of a room in a level. But *Quake* will be true 3-D, and with the tools we have in-house, you can architect anything—and I do mean *anything*.

Probably one of the most exciting parts is that it will have a client/server-based technology. *DOOM* allowed four players, peer to peer on a local network, or two players over a modem. In *Quake*, the number of participants in the game will only be limited by the number of clients your server can handle. If your network computer can handle 20 people at a time, then 20 people can play *Quake* at the same time.

FLUX: A number of games coming out now will only run on the highest-end machines. How does this trend affect *Quake*? Will most people be able to run it?

WILBUR: The target machine is a 486/66, and by the time the game is out, that should be the median market. We will likely have the game set up so that it takes advantage of extra hardware that you might have under the hood—if you have a Pentium, if you have some kind of graphic accelerator. Just like having a sound card, it will make the game more exciting and give it more features. But we take a machine and make it our target, and before we release a game, we make damn sure that it runs correctly on the target.

FLUX: What can you tell us about the general plotline of *Quake*?

WILBUR: Nothing. It's yet to be developed. Let's say fantasy/medieval maybe, and leave it at that. During development, the last thing we apply is the story. It's the least important part of the game. We have to develop the great technology first. Imagine *DOOM* with a different set of graphics—terrorists, for example—and you can still make the game work. But in order to give you that nightmare feeling, we decided to go with demons or aliens. When it was finished, the story of demons from hell coming through to our plane of existence had been fully flushed. So who knows where *Quake* is going to go?

FLUX: Will *Quake* be shareware?

WILBUR: Yes, it will still be shareware first, retail second.

FLUX: Any kind of projected release date?

WILBUR: No. The official release date for all of our products is "when it's finished." And we never miss that date, by the way. [*laughs*] Our job is to make sure you, the user, have fun. And if it were done now, we'd want you to play it—we'd want you to have fun.

FLUX: But still, *Quake* will be geared toward people who love *DOOM*—those who love a bloody, violent firefight, right?

WILBUR: Oh, yes. According to some of the developers, *Quake* will make *DOOM* look like a walk in the park.

DAUGHTERS OF DOOM

DOOM wasn't the original first-person perspective game, and it sure as hell won't be the last. Here's the skinny on some of the genre's most notable siblings.

ESCAPE FROM THE MINDMASTER (Starpath, Atari 2600 w/Starpath Supercharger adapter) The short-lived Starpath Supercharger adapter allowed gamers to load games stored on cassette tapes into their Atari 2600 deck and play. *Escape From The Mindmaster* dropped players into a high-walled maze and challenged them to solve puzzles and eventually escape. Those blocky line graphics may not look like much now, but in its day, it was creepy as hell.

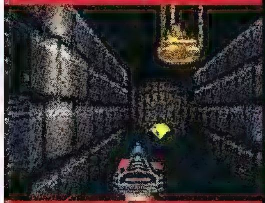
WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id/Apogee, PC)

For modern PC gaming, this was the one that started it all. Borrowing its title from a classic Apple II adventure game, *Wolfenstein 3-D* bore little resemblance to its namesake—or anything else, for that matter. For the price of a free download, the fully-functional Shareware game let you wander around a swiftly-scrolling Nazi prison in which your main objective was to slaughter SS officers, guard dogs, evil doctors and something called an Ubermutant. Unfortunately, *Wolf*'s transition to the SNES hardly did justice to the PC original. Thanks to Nintendo's then-strict content policy, the SNES version was stripped of its Nazi elements and blood, and generally sucks by comparison. The superior Jaguar version, however, has all the Reich stuff.

THE TERMINATOR: RAMPAGE (Bethesda, PC) This spin-off of the great Schwarzenegger action flick was far more detailed than *Wolfenstein*, but as a result was also much slower and therefore less fun. Even still, shooting at random bunches of pixels that vaguely resembled T-800's was quite cool.

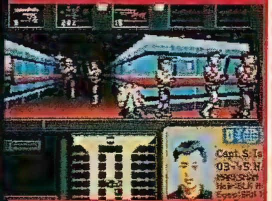
BLAKE STONE: ALIENS OF GOLD (Apogee, PC) When id software and its distributor, Apogee, parted ways, Apogee was determined to release a first-person game on their own that would knock the snot out of whatever id was up to. Jam Productions provided Apogee with *Blake Stone: Aliens Of Gold*, featuring a fine updating of *Wolf*—improved graphics, detailed surroundings and a new *Flash Gordon*-type scenario. But eight days after the release of *Blake*, id would simply crush both Apogee and Jam with the unleashing of *DOOM*.

ESCAPE FROM MONSTER MANOR (Electronic Arts, 3DO) EA's first 3DO title was a nifty *Wolf* knockoff set in a haunted house, with gamers taking the role of head ghostbuster. Although hampered by loose control, the game's spiffy visuals and genuinely creepy atmosphere made *Manor* cool enough.



CORRIDOR 7 (Capstone, PC CD-ROM) A day late and a dollar short, *Corridor 7* was a sci-fi survival tale built around the *Wolf 3-D* engine—but released after *DOOM*. Nobody cared.

ZERO TOLERANCE (Accolade, Genesis) *Wolfenstein 3-D* was supposedly planned for the Genesis until someone realized the hardware just couldn't handle it. Accolade went and proved them wrong with a not-bad *Wolf*-style knockoff. Hey, for Genesis gamers, it was better than nothing.



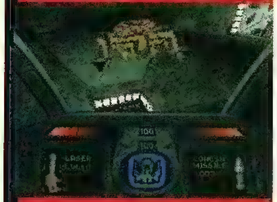
ALIEN VS. PREDATOR (Atari, Jaguar) One of the few truly great games for the struggling Jaguar, *Alien Vs Predator* dumped players in dark, eerie labyrinth of hallways and rooms with acid-bleeding aliens around every corner. Being able to play as either the alien, predator or space marine (each with different mission objectives) was a nifty option that only added to the game's depth. Creepy, gory, massive adrenaline rush—what more could you want in a *DOOM* clone?

RISE OF THE TRIAD (Apogee, PC) After the Blake Stone debacle, Apogee bounced back in style with *Rise Of The Triad*, featuring sharper graphics than *DOOM*, a nifty two-pistol approach, completely different levels on both the shareware and registered versions, a CD-ROM version chock full o' goodies and a cool multiplayer option that made the game far more violent—you could only see internal organs and limbs falling from the sky after a particularly brutal kill when connected via modem.

HERETIC (id/Raven, PC) British developers Raven licensed the *DOOM* engine from id to create a medieval shareware shooter loaded of gargoyles, undead skeletons and archaic weapons instead of hell-spawned demons and rocket launchers. *DOOM* in a castle, if you will, and a truly solid effort that currently has *DOOM* lovers enchanted.

DARK FORCES (LucasArts, PC CD-ROM) If *Heretic* is *DOOM* in a castle, *Dark Forces* is *DOOM* in the Death Star. LucasArts' long-delayed CD-only *Star Wars*-based shooter features enhanced resolution, the ability to look up and down and, of course, real *Star Wars* enemies, weapons, missions and music (but sadly, no multiplayer option). If you've ever wanted to swim through garbage and meet a dianoga eye-to-singular-eye, here's your chance.

DESCENT (Interplay, PC) We're talking serious improvements in 3-D gameplay here. Stuck in a one-man space ship taking out mining robots run amok, *Descent* players fly their ship in a true 3-D environment that'll have your stomach churning in no time. Strap yourself in and roll your ship a full 360 degrees, strafe in all directions and even blow up stuff on the walls. Takes some getting used to, but definitely worth a little vomiting.



CHEATING DEATH

Is your measly pistol no match for a horde of Cyberdemons? Can't find the damn exit in level 27? No problem—just use any of the following DOOM codes and cheat your way to victory!

DOOM (PC)
Type these in at any time during the game:

IDDQD—God mode. Makes you invincible.

IDKFA—All keys, all weapons and full ammo.

IDFA—All weapons and full ammo (no keys).

IDCLEV##—Go directly to the level specified by the two-digit number. To go to the first game's fifth level, for instance, type IDCLEV05. To see the second *Wolfenstein* secret level in *DOOM II*, it's IDCLEV32. If you enter a number for a level that doesn't exist, the game will crash.

IDMYPOS—Displays your position coordinates in hexadecimal notation.

IDCHOPPERS—If you don't have the chainsaw, type this in to get it.

IDSPISPOPD—Turns clipping on and off. Allows you to walk through walls.

IDBEHOLD—Activates the cheat menu. Once you're in the cheat menu, use the following keys: L-Light sourcing toggle on/off; V-Invulnerability; R-Radiation Suit; I-Invisible; S-Strength (Berzerk mode); A-All map.

IDDT—Enter this code on the map screen (press Tab to call up map). Type once to show the current level's entire map, including secret areas. Type it twice to additionally show the location of the level's objects and monsters. Type it a third time to change everything back to normal.

All the above codes work in *DOOM II* as well, with the exception of **IDSPISPOPD**—that's been changed to the more logical IDCLIP. Also, in *DOOM II*, try:

IDMUS##—Lets you hear the music from the two-digit level number you specify. To hear the music from the next-to-last level, enter IDMUS29.

DOOM (GENESIS 32X)
For God mode and full invincibility, pause the game then press X, Z, Mode and Up simultaneously on a six-button controller. To get keys and full ammo, pause and hold A, C, Mode and Up. Both codes require accuracy and some practice to get right, but they *do* work. In other words, if you can't figure it out, it's not our fault.

DOOM (JAGUAR)
DEGREELESSNESS (GOD) MODE: Pause the game, hold *, unpause.

VERY HAPPY AMMO ADDED: Pause, hold #, unpause.

LEVEL SELECT: For stages1-9, pause the game, hold any number, unpause and you'll warp to that level. For stages 10-19, pause, hold A and any number, unpause and you'll warp to that level. For stages 20-24, pause, hold B and any number, unpause and you'll warp to that level. Be sure not to warp to any levels beyond 24 or your game will crash!

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR (JAGUAR)
DEBUG CODES: To activate any of the following codes, first you must enter the debug code. To do this, pause the game. Then hit Option, 6, 1+3, B, A, 9, A, 9, A, *, Option, 6, #, *, *, Option, 2, Option. Enter it right and you'll hear the predator laugh to confirm the code. Once it's activated, enter the following commands to cheat your way to victory!

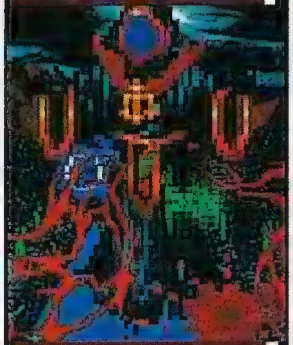
BASIC CHEATS (regardless of character selection):
Option + A - Lowers you a floor
Option + B - Raises you a floor
Option + 5 - God Mode

MARINE:
Option + 1 - Gain/Lose Shotgun
Option + 2 - Gain/Lose M14-A Pulse Rifle
Option + 3 - Gain/Lose Flame Thrower
Option + 4 - Gain/Lose Smart Gun
Option + 1234 - Refill Ammo
Option + 6 - Raise Security Level
Option + 8 - Gain/Lose Motion Tracker
Option + 9 - Lower Security Level

ALIEN:
Option + 1 - Gain/Lose Tail
Option + 2 - Gain/Lose Claw
Option + 3 - Gain/Lose Extending Mouth

PREDATOR:
Option + 1 - Gain/Lose Combi Stick
Option + 2 - Gain/Lose Shoulder Cannon
Option + 3 - Gain/Lose Smart Disc
Option + 4 - Gain/Lose Wrist Blade

HERETIC
Art thou a wimp who doth feel the need to cheateth? Type these in at any point during the game:



RAMBO: Get all weapons

SKEL: Get all keys

QUICKEN: God mode

KITTY: Toggles clipping mode (walk through walls)

MASSACRE: Kills all monsters on a level

SHAZAM: Power-up weapons

RAVMAP: Show full map in map mode (type again to show all objects)

PONCE: Full health

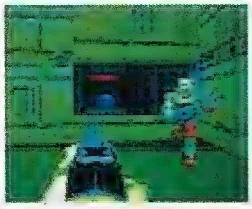
ENGAGEXY: Warp to different level (X=Episode, Y=Level)

COCKADOODLEDOO: Turn into a chicken (yes, really)

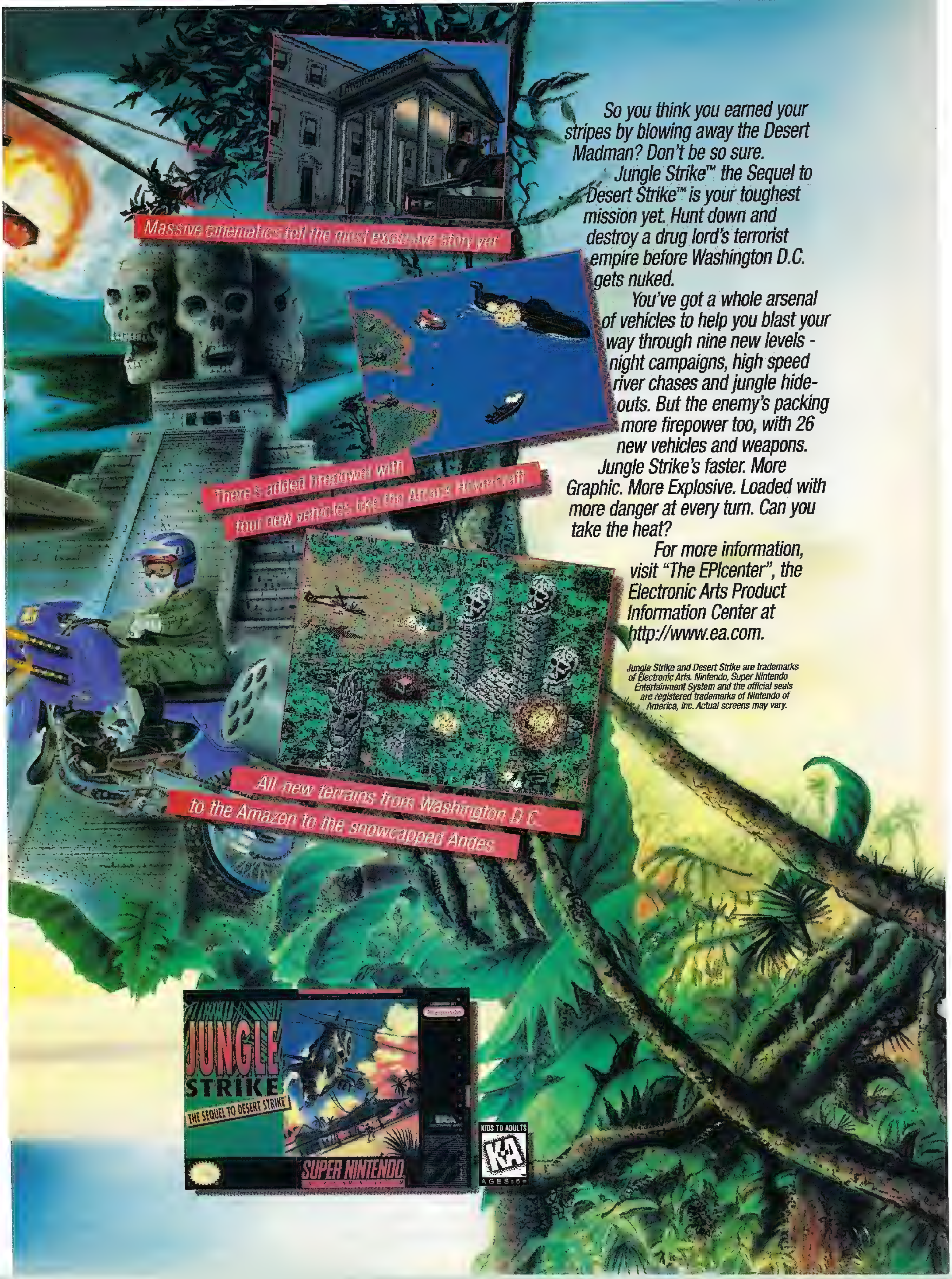
GIMME: Get artifact. To use the GIMME cheat, type GIMME and one of the following letters to obtain that artifact:
a: Ring Of Invulnerability
b: Shadowsphere (Invisibility)
c: Quartz Flask (25% health)
e: Tome Of Power (Powerup weapons)
f: Torch
g: Time Bomb Of The Ancients
h: Morph Ovum
i: Wings of Wrath
j: Chaos Device (Emergency teleport)

SNES GETS DOOM!!

Is no platform safe from the horror of *DOOM*? Along with Jaguar, Ultra 64, 3DO, 32X, PC (which first introduced *DOOM*) and Mac, the Super Nintendo is the latest system to add *DOOM* to its game library. According to the game's developers at Sculptured Software, the SNES version of *DOOM* will feature just about everything that makes *DOOM* for the PC the most intense shooter in history: 22 of the original 27 levels are completely intact, right down to every claustrophobic hidden passageway. Every monster, boss, weapon and powerup from the original will be there in all their gory glory. And if you want blood, you've got it—we're talking bucket loads, folks. *DOOM*, scheduled for release by summer's end, will be a 16-meg cartridge that utilizes Nintendo's new SFX 2 chip and, according to a member of Sculptured's *DOOM* team, will "blow the 32X version away."



WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE.



Massive cinematics tell the most explosive story yet

There's added firepower with four new vehicles like the Attack Hovercraft

All new terrains from Washington D.C. to the Amazon to the snowcapped Andes

So you think you earned your stripes by blowing away the Desert Madman? Don't be so sure.

Jungle Strike™ the Sequel to Desert Strike™ is your toughest mission yet. Hunt down and destroy a drug lord's terrorist empire before Washington D.C. gets nuked.

You've got a whole arsenal of vehicles to help you blast your way through nine new levels - night campaigns, high speed river chases and jungle hide-outs. But the enemy's packing more firepower too, with 26 new vehicles and weapons. Jungle Strike's faster. More Graphic. More Explosive. Loaded with more danger at every turn. Can you take the heat?

For more information, visit "The EPIcenter", the Electronic Arts Product Information Center at http://www.ea.com.

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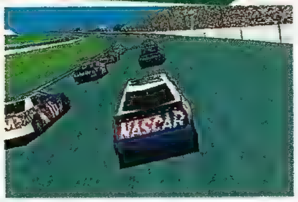
15 Essential CD-ROMS

by Mark East and Jeff Kitts

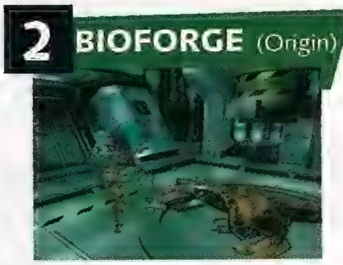
Don't be suckered by expensive packaging and advertising hype—purchasing computer CD-ROM games is risky business. If not careful, you may find yourself stuck with a $50 frisbee. To help you make the wise buy, FLUX has compiled this guide to 15 PC CD-ROM games no computer owner should be without.

1 NASCAR RACING (Papyrus)



In the high-octane world of auto racing simulations, Papyrus' *NASCAR Racing* takes the checkered flag by a mile. Gorgeous, true-to-life graphics will have you thinking you're watching an ESPN telecast from the high banks of Talladega Speedway, and the diversity of the options will give you that oily-rag feeling of a garage mechanic. Altering your car is not only a considerable challenge, but necessary if you hope to finish higher than last (or, for that matter, finish the race!). Change gear ratios, inflate/deflate tires, change the spoiler angle, switch from a Chevy chassis to a Pontiac—everything affects the performance of your car, and setting them correctly is vital. After that, you're ready to hit the asphalt—and that's where the real fun begins. High-speed bumper-to-bumper racing, drafting, pit stops and wrecks that'll make you wish your desk chair had a seatbelt.

2 BIOFORGE (Origin)



Origin's been attempting to create a true interactive movie for the PC for quite some time now, and they've finally hit pay dirt with *Bioforge*. With no formal interface, *Bioforge* offers completely cinematic action without windows, buttons or gauges. Everything's in real time, and there are no long, boring video interludes to endure. You have complete control over your player, a mysterious man-machine who has to escape from a doomed, deserted space station while trying to find out why you were turned into a cyborg. The puzzles are difficult and well thought-out, sometimes involving items in ten different locations! And best of all, the game offers a combat mode where you can go head-to-head (using an assortment of 18 different moves) with any of the hideously disfigured mutants or heavily-armed robots. It's just one of many features that put *Bioforge* well ahead of the interactive pack.

3 WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER (Origin)

On the surface, the third installment in the ever-popular *Wing Commander* series may seem more like another boring pseudo-movie than an actual game. Not so. Despite the casting of such Hollywood veterans as Mark Hamill, Malcom McDowell and John Rhys-Davies (not to mention former porn queen Ginger Lynn!!), *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger* is a magnificent space shooter boosted by some fine acting and a well-written script. Superbly fast gameplay and full motion video that *isn't* hard to stomach round out the package—and it all adds up to *WC III* being the best adventure/space shoot-'em-up around.

4 BURIED IN TIME: THE JOURNEYMAN PROJECT 2

(Sanctuary Woods)

Presto Studios, a small grass-roots operation from San Diego, set the computer gaming world on its ass a short time ago with the release of their critically-acclaimed game, *The Journeyman Project*. It was the first of its kind: a photo-realistic adventure game with incredible graphics much like *Myst*, only it came before *Myst*. Now, Presto, along with Sanctuary Woods, have done it again with the sequel to *The Journeyman Project 2: Buried In Time*. With seven gigantic environments and time periods ranging from 1204 A.D. to 2319, 25,000 rendered images and hundreds of puzzles to solve, *Buried In Time* is guaranteed to have you ripping out your hair for over 50 frustrating hours.

5 THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER

(Virgin Interactive)

This new title from Virgin Interactive, masterminds behind *The 7th Guest*, has just about everything one could ask for in a PC CD-ROM. Lots of high-quality full motion video, some kick-ass shoot-'em-up action, difficult puzzles and top-notch sounds. Oh, and *Wayne's World* babe Tia Carrere. Nuff said.

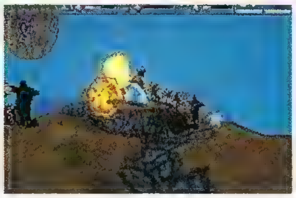
6 UNDER A KILLING MOON

(Access Software)

The concept of a point-and-click interactive movie/adventure might not exactly grab fans of shoot-'em-ups and sports sims by the balls, but Access' *Under A Killing Moon* is one game that's sure to change all that. Where most "interactive movies" fail by making the gamer sit back and watch the action unfold before their sleepy eyes, *Killing Moon* offers a truly interactive, fully-explorable 3-D environment. As Tex Murphy, a private dick in the year 2042, you're out to crack a pawn shop robbery/murder case. Your quest for clues will bring you face-to-face with various inhabitants of this futuristic world, and you must talk to them to find pieces of the puzzle. In addition, you have to use Tex's eyes to find other important clues—this is done by walking around in a 3-D environment (picture *DOOM*) where you can look up, down, walk, run, climb stairs, move in any direction, pick up and store items in your inventory and examine just about anything in sight. You can even hop in your space-age car and transport yourself to a new location in search of clues. Just the look of the game is a work of art: everything beautifully rendered, right down to the smallest detail. But be warned: *Under A Killing Moon* is no easy feat (you'll be thankin' your lucky stars for that hint menu), and is a massive game that requires a healthy amount of computer power to run (486/66, 8 megs). There's no blood and you may not be able to shoot anything, but *Under A Killing Moon* is still a revolutionary piece of software that's a major blast to play.

7 MAGIC CARPET

(Electronic Arts)



Part *DOOM*, part flight-sim, part RPG, EA's recent *Magic Carpet* is one incredible journey in a mystical 3D environment. As an apprentice wizard, your goal is to right the wrongs of the ancient wizards who, through violent competition, shattered the world into 50 pieces. It's up to you to master the controls of your magic carpet and gather mana, the energy force that exists in all living things in order to restore equilibrium to the 50 worlds. The flight dynamics are flawless, the graphics astounding, and if you happen to own a VR headset like Forte's VFX1 or Virtual i/O's i-glasses!, you're in for one hell of a ride.

8 THE VORTEX: QUANTUM GATE II

(Hyperbole Studios)

Greg Roach, prolific filmmaker and brains behind Hyperbole Studios, has dreamt up a new format in CD-ROM entertainment. It's called VirtualCinema, and is basically a high-performance software engine used to handle CD-ROM data and digital video efficiently so as to bring CD-ROM fiction one step closer to being true interactive movies. Innovative, to say the least. And thanks to a truly ingenious interface, not only do you relate to the character's senses, but also his thoughts and dreams. You *are* that character. Classy and intelligent with great production values and a plot that'll keep you guessing until the end. Interactive fiction at its best.

9 HARDBALL 4

(Accolade)

While many have tried and failed, only one game company continues to make quality baseball simulations for just about every platform, from the 16-bit systems all the way to the PC—and that's Accolade. Like EA knows hockey and soccer, Accolade knows baseball. And that long-standing expertise is displayed in full force with their *Hardball 4* PC CD-ROM. Despite the lack of an MLB license (although there is an MLBPA one that brings real player names to the game), *Hardball 4* offers just about everything one could ask for in a baseball sim. The number of options is staggering, from setting the severity of the wind and the percentage of humidity in the ballpark, right on down to changing the team colors. You can go completely nuts even before the ump says, "Play ball!" And once the action begins, you're in for a marvelous treat. Visually, the graphics in *Hardball 4* are breathtaking—every last detail of every major league ballpark is perfectly in place and the digitized players have the look, feel and movement of their

CONTINUED ON PG. 78

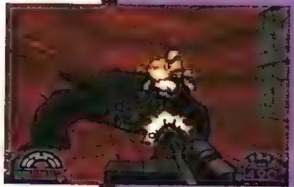
by ZaCH MESTON

PC CD-ROM

STAR
DARK FORCES
WARS

Obi-Wan's nowhere to be found and Yoda's nothin' but dust. You're on your own, in the middle of the *Star Wars* universe armed with only a blaster and a few thermal detonators. The pressure's on, but you can't take it. Quick, start running—or, better yet, study our Dark Forces Strategy Guide and cheat your way out of this sprawling 3-D adventure.

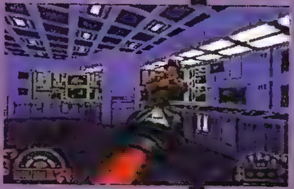
If *Star Wars* and *DOOM* were to somehow get together and do the nasty, *Dark Forces* would be the result of their sweaty lust. Packed with 14 levels of *Star Wars*-inspired sharp-shooting satisfaction—along with several bizarre secret areas which prove beyond a reasonable doubt that LucasArts' programmers partake of the occasional doobie—*Dark Forces* is the ultimate PC CD-ROM for those itchin' to fell pesky Stormtroopers in a hail of laser blasts.



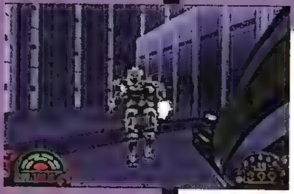
But while stopping Imperial Officers dead in their tracks is nothing short of a major thrill, getting through *Dark Forces* is no easy task. To master this challenging shooter, you can either explore every inch of every level until your hands cramp, or you can sidestep all that hassle and just use this handy-dandy *Dark Forces* Strategy Guide! Read on for a heapin' helpin' of valuable information, including cheat codes, level warps, secret areas and step-by-step walkthroughs of two of *Dark Forces'* toughest missions.

WEAPONS

You begin the game with a Modified Bryar Pistol (a standard blaster), but you'll find many more toys to play with during each mission. And when you complete a mission, you're able to keep any weapons, ammo and items you've acquired along the way. Here's a rundown of the weaponry in *Dark Forces*:



- Hand to Hand: Once you run out of ammo, you're stuck with throwing punches—which basically means you're screwed. Find some ammo quick!
- Modified Bryar Pistol: It fires as slow as Al Cowlings driving a white Ford Bronco, but it's a very accurate weapon. Like all the laser weapons, the Bryar's shots are less powerful at long range. Uses one Energy Unit per shot.
- Stormtrooper Laser Rifle: A faster blaster than the Bryal Pistol, but less accurate and wasteful of valuable energy—two Energy Units per shot. Use it against a group of enemies.
- Thermal Detonator: A rather fancy grenade. The longer you hold down the primary fire button, the farther you toss this puppy. Press the secondary fire button to set the Detonator with a three-second explosion delay. This weapon is best against a single strong foe at close to medium range.
- Imperial Repeater Gun: Press the primary button to shoot a single bolt, or the secondary button to fire three bolts in a triangular spread. The Repeater fires fast and has good accuracy, even at long range. Uses one or three Power Cells per shot.
- Jeron Fusion Cutter: Press the primary button to fire one large bolt from one of the Cutter's four barrels, or the secondary button to let loose with four bolts simultaneously. The primary shot only uses one Power Cell, but the secondary one eats up eight Cells. This toy of destruction is best against several well-armored enemies at close range.
- I.M. Mines: Press the primary button to drop a mine that goes off after three seconds, or the secondary button to drop a mine that's armed after one second and explodes when an Imperial soldier steps on it. The mine beeps just before detonation, a subtle reminder to get the hell away from it. Drop mines behind you when you're being chased by several baddies.
- Packered Mortar Gun: This lovely weapon launches Shells that wipe out anything within their explosion radius. You can alter the distance of the shot by looking upward before firing. (Look upward at 45 degrees for maximum distance.) A great long-range weapon against groups of troops.
- Stouker Concussion Rifle: Unleashes a shock wave that continues ahead until it hits a wall. Yank it out against a gang of soldiers at long range. Uses four Power Cells per shot.
- Assault Cannon: Simply bitchin'. Press the primary button to shoot a massive energy bolt, or the secondary button to launch a rocket. Save this mutha for the Dark Troopers.

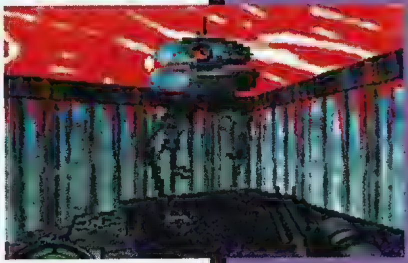


ENEMIES

- Stormtrooper: The Empire seems to be slacking in marksmanship training, because these guys couldn't hit Jabba the Hutt at ten paces (and their accuracy in the films wasn't much better). Killed with two direct shots.
- Imperial Officer: These weenies with their amusing little pistols *deserve* to be shot. Killed with one direct shot.
- Imperial Commando: The fastest and

most accurate of the Imperial troops. Killed with three direct shots.

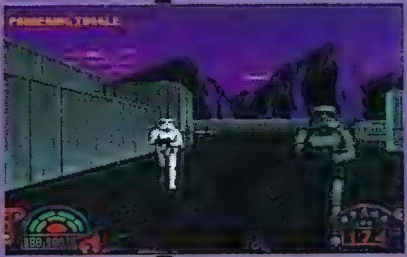
- Gun Turret: If you see one of these, wait until it's pointing away from you before shooting it.
- Probe Droid: These floating robots move slowly, but shoot powerful laser bolts. Killed with five direct shots, and drops ten Power Cells.
- Interrogation Droid: Faster and armed with more powerful weapons than the Probe Droid. Killed with five direct shots, and drops ten Power Cells.



- Remote: Very fast and very annoying. The best way to shoot it down is to back away, look up or down to line up a shot, and shuffle left or right while firing.
- Black Droid: This harmless little bugger rolls along the ground and chirps happily. Naturally, you should waste it. Aim at the ground, or crouch, and destroy it to make it drop a Battery.
- Trandoshan: These scaly suckers use the Stouker Concussion Rifle, making them very dangerous at close or long range.
- Gran: A triple-eyed bounty hunter who likes to whip Thermal Detonators at you. Get close to a Gran and he foolishly puts up his dukes. Punch or shoot him.
- Gamorrean Guard: Stay at long range and fire away. Don't get too close or he'll cleave you to bits with his ax.
- Dianoga: This trash-lovin' monster lives in water or sewage. It peeks a single eyeball out of the depths before nibbling hungrily on your lower body. When you hear it rumbling, you can attack it in two ways: back away and fire, or put away your weapons and whack it with a few punches.
- Boba Fett: The coolest of the cool shows up at the end of Mission 11 to make your life a living hell.

CHEAT CODES

- From a DOS prompt, go into the *Dark Forces* directory and run IMUSE.EXE (the sound card setup program). Hold down both SHIFT keys and either CTRL key, then type WORK. A message appears at the bottom of the screen: "Press TAB to view background." Press the TAB key to see a bizarre scrolling message, and keep watching the blue bar at the top of the screen to learn the "double super secret cheat codes." (The ridiculously long codes are bogus, in case you have no sense of humor.) To activate a cheat code, simply type it in during a level. Type it a second time to disable it.
- **LABUG:** Insect Mode. Turns you into a teeny-tiny bounty hunter. Look at the map and notice that there's no longer a circle around you, indicating your miraculous shrinkage. With your Kate Moss-esque bod, you can scoot through narrow passages, duck to a height of 0.3 units, and more easily dodge enemy fire.
- **LADATA:** Coordinate Information. Shows the coordinates of your current location in the level. X is your east/west position; Y is your altitude; Z is your north/south position; H is your height; S is the percentage of secrets discovered.



- **LAIMLAME:** Full Invincibility. You are a god amongst men, a stud amongst wimps, completely protected from harm. Don't pick up a Shield Supercharge, though; when the charge runs out, you're human again and have to retype the code.
- **LAMAXOUT:** Everything Added. As if by magic, you get every weapon, every item, and a full supply of ammo and shields.
- **LANTFH:** Teleport to Current Map Position. With this cheat, you can move between the floors of a level. Call up the map and use the [and] keys to select your destination level, then type the code. You can't teleport to a location without an exit.
- **LAPOGO:** Disable Height Checking. If you walk into a wall with a ledge above it, you're automatically teleported to the ledge. Doesn't do any good with bridges, since there's nothing to walk into underneath them.
- **LAPOSTAL:** Add Weapons, Ammo & Power-Ups. You're given an arsenal that would make any disgruntled mailman proud: all the projectile weapons, along with four items (Air Mask, Battery, Ice Cleats, and Infra-red Goggles) and full ammo, shields, and health.
- **LARANDY:** Weapon Super Charge. For fifty wonderful seconds, your weapon firing rate is increased, along with (duh) your ammo usage.
- **LAREDLITE:** Pondering Toggle. All the enemies are frozen in their tracks, presumably thinking deep thoughts, but you can move and shoot freely. When you shoot a bad guy in mid-ponder, he doesn't drop dead until you turn the mode off.
- **LASKIP:** Force Successful Level Completion. You immediately "complete" the current level.
- **LAUNLOCK:** Inventory Added. Check your inventory and notice that you have every possible item, including all three keys and all five codes.
- **LACDS:** Map Supermode. Type it once and the mild-mannered map becomes a supermap, showing all the enemies and items. Type it a second time and the supermap shows stairs with a dark green color, making them easier to spot. Type it a third time to turn the supermap off. Here's what all those symbols represent:

Blue Square	=	Weapon Ammo
Blue Triangle	=	Shield Units
Gray Triangle	=	Dead Enemy
Orange Triangle	=	Shootable Scenery
Yellow Dot	=	Normal Scenery
Yellow Triangle	=	Live Enemy

LEVEL CODES

For the truly pathetic, typing in these codes will automatically warp you to any mission

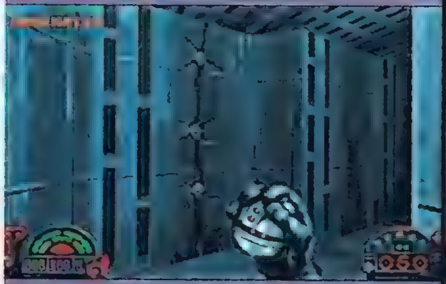
Mission 1	=	LASECBASE
Mission 2	=	LATALAY
Mission 3	=	LASEWERS
Mission 4	=	LATESTBASE
Mission 5	=	LAGROMAS
Mission 6	=	LADTENTION
Mission 7	=	ARAMSHED
Mission 8	=	LAROBOTICS
Mission 9	=	LANARSHADA
Mission 10	=	LAJABSHIP

Mission 11 – LAIMPCITY
Mission 12 – LAFUELSTAT
Mission 13 – LAEXECUTOR
Mission 14 – LAARC

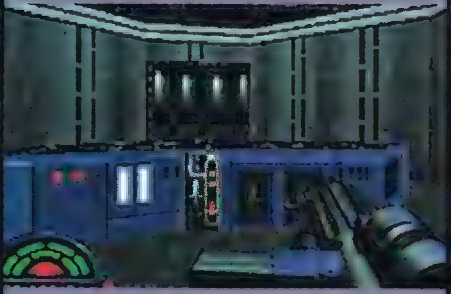
MISSION 6: COMPLETE WALKTHROUGH

- From the starting point, walk southeast and follow the ledge as it curves around. (There's only one path, so it's mighty hard to get off track.) Keep going until you reach a room with a switch on the pillar and several items on the floor. Press the switch and get on the floating platform when it moves over to you. Turn west and shoot the switch as the platform moves to the north door. Walk into the facility.

- Walk north through the sliding door into a large room. Continue north and scoot through the door on the east wall. Follow the tunnel around to a switch. Press it and walk across the platform that rises up to your ledge. Move northeast and press the switch between the two windows. Return to the large room where you went through the east door. Press the switch on the north wall and go up to the elevator.
- Walk west and around the corner. Look for a section of wall south of the west elevator with a crack in it. Blast through the crack with a Thermal Detonator and grab the power-ups inside the secret room. Move back to the west and look for a tiny crack at the top of the long west wall. Blow through the crack and jump through the hole to find a smoking lounge, complete with ash trays and cigarette butts strewn around the floor.



- Take the west elevator to floor S2. (Look for the blue logo on the walls.) The Imperial Officer has Code Key 3. Kill him and then blow up the four cracks in the walls of the area, all with secret stuff inside. Two cracks are near the Officer, two near the elevator. One of the cracks leads to a switch. Press the switch and go down the elevator to grab an extra life. Use the code in the code lock near the elevator to open the door to the east. Take the items behind the door.
- Take the elevator down to floor S4. Walk northeast into the room and look for a vent in the south wall. Jump into the vent and crawl to find the switch. Press it, leave the vent, and run northeast through the green force field before it turns on again. Press the switch in the northeast room to open the north door and close the south one. Go into the north area and explore the prison cells to find items and a few Grans. Press the switch again to close the north door and open the south one. Crawl behind the table in the east room and push the switch to turn off the green force field.



- Take the elevator down to floor S5. The force field to the west flickers off regularly, giving you the chance to move through it. Go through the door in the southeast corner and walk into the next room. Blow through the crack in the north wall and go through the southeast door into the next room, with a few Imperial Commandos. Open a secret door in the south wall for a few medical kits. Enter the next room, with a switch visible through a window. Shoot the switch to open the doors. Walk through the east door in the next room and put on the Air Mask. Walk through the flickering force field and pick up the Red Key.
- Take the east elevator up to floor S3. Kill the Officers in the west room and pick up Code Keys 4 and 5. Walk northeast to the code lock and enter Code 5. Walk south across the bridge and through the door. Pick up the goodies and return to the code lock. Enter Code 4, walk southeast across the bridge, and take more goodies.
- Take the east elevator up to floor S1. Walk north, kill the Officers, and pick up Code Keys 1 and 2. Return to the elevator and ride down to floor S5. Press the switch outside the elevator to send it up to S3. Move through the level to the west elevator and ride it up to floor 0. Press the switch outside the elevator to send it down to S3. Open the Red Key door near the west elevator and look at the schematic on the wall. Leave the Red Key room and go to the hole behind the west elevator. Jump up the east wall into another hole. Drop into the vent and open the door. Jump down onto the top of the west elevator. Open the east door and continue across the east elevator. In the tunnel, turn west and look up to see the message "EWOKS SUCK" scribbled on the wall. Hysterical!

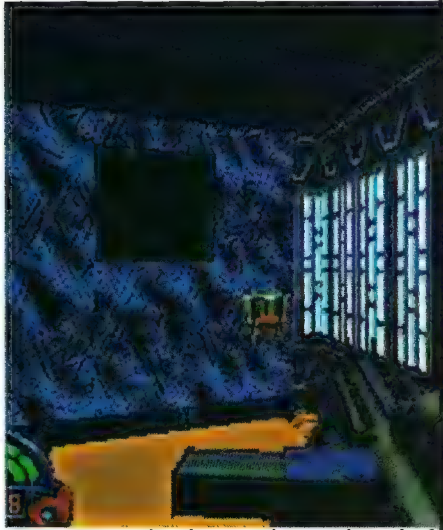
- Follow the tunnel north and look for a crack on the west wall. Blow it open to find a secret room. Continue north until you drop into a trash compactor. Jump onto the north press, then run and jump to the south press. Run and jump again to the northwest press. One more jump, this one to the platform on the west side. Open the door and set off the mine to blow through the wall. Walk into the prison area and enter Code 2 to open the prison with Madine inside. (You can enter Code 1 or the code "XXX" to open the other prisons.)

MISSION 11: COMPLETE WALKTHROUGH

- Walk south out of the landing area, then walk east and north to find a niche of supplies. Drop onto the east platform and open the secret door in the east wall. Ride up the elevator and raid the narrow tunnel full of items. Return to the landing

area and walk south into the square area. Ride down the southwest elevator and walk south. Search along the northwest wall of the large open area to find a face in the wall. Press the face to reveal a hidden switch; shoot the switch to raise the platform.

- Pick up the items and press the switch to lower the platform. Walk west and climb the stairs. Snag the items and head east. Ride down the elevator and walk south. Pick up the Blue Key while blasting the mob of Stormtroopers. Go into the south tunnel and pick up the items. Walk out to the roof and run and jump east across the gap. Enter the door. As the platform starts moving downward, walk into the northeast alcove. Open the hidden door and pick up the Weapon Supercharger.
- At the bottom of the elevator shaft, walk east through two doors and up the stairs. Open the door at the north end of the complex and ride up the elevator. There are two doors at the top. Go through the right door first and pick up the items. Go through the left door and press the switch on the west wall to open a vent above the switch. Crouch and press the switch on the west wall twice to slide the center block closer to the vent. Run and jump into the vent. Hit the switch at the end of the tunnel to open the access ahead of you. Walk south and pick up the Red Key in the square room.

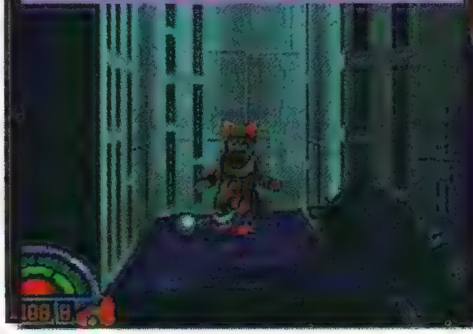


- Hit the switch and walk into the courtyard, then open the Red Key door on the west side of the yard. Walk east and take the elevator. Continue upward and into a large open area. Walk south and open the door (watch out for the Dark Trooper behind it!). Press the switch on the south wall to reveal a door at the north end of the large area. Go through the door and ride down the elevator to the Hexagon.
- Open all the doors in the outer ring, walking in a clockwise direction and pressing each switch as you find it. Now you have to set the switches to open the doors into the Computer Core. Walk to the northwest switch and move around the outer ring counterclockwise, setting each switch in order. Switch 1: Red, Red, Black. Switch 2: Red, Red, Black. Switch 3: Red, Red, Black. Switch 4: Red, Black, Red. Switch 5: Red, Black, Red. Switch 6: Black, Red, Red.
- There are three switches on the Computer Core. Press the switch on the southwest side of the Core, the northwest side, and the east side to lower the Core. Walk west and press the switches to reveal a third switch between them. Pick up the Data Tape. Walk west through the tunnel, then ride up the northeast elevator. Walk north to your ship's landing area, where Boba Fett is doing loop-the-loops with his jet pack. Shoot down the Fettster and your ship returns.

DARK FORCES SECRET AREAS

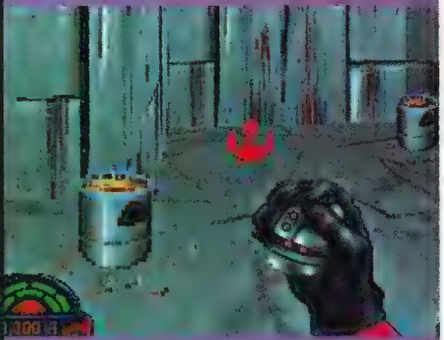
IMPRISONED EWOK

- At the start of Mission 4, activate the LAIMLAME and LAPOGO cheats. Face north and walk off the ledge, then walk along the west wall until you zoom up to a secret room with a chain hanging in the ceiling. Open the secret door in the east wall to find the furry little bugger. For big laffs, toast the Ewok with a weapon.



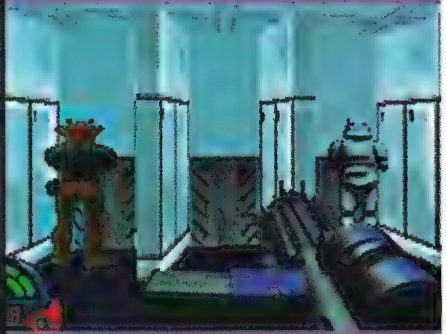
SMOKING LOUNGE

- Play through Mission 6 until you reach the west elevator. Look for a tiny crack at the top of the long west wall. Blow through the crack and jump through the hole to find a smoking lounge, complete with ashtrays and cigarette butts strewn around the floor.



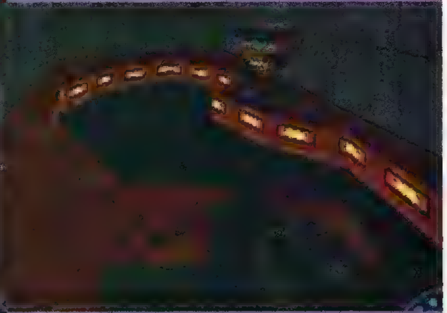
THE MEN'S ROOM

- After entering the spaceport in Mission 7, head south and open each door until you catch a Gran and two Troopers draining their respective veins.



JABBA'S JACUZZI

- At the end of Mission 10, you drop into a deep pit. Look up the hole to spot a switch on the wall. Getting up to the switch requires a bit of psychotic behavior on your part: drop an I.M. Mine on the ground and let the explosion fling you upward. Hit the switch, then walk west and drop to the ground between the ledges. Walk north through the secret door to find a jacuzzi shaped like Jabba The Hutt.



by ZaCH MESTON

3DO

GEX™
Start
Options
Previews

GEX is an excellent platform game for the 3DO (one of few things the great 32-bit system actually needed), but some gamers are finding it a bit too easy. What most of these whiners don't know is that *GEX* has an entire secret stage, called Planet X, with eight levels guaranteed to make you cry in frustration as you lose thirty lives in a row trying to make a bitch of a jump. This spiffy strategy guide not only reveals how to unlock the secrets of Planet X, it also tells you where to find all the bonus rounds (except the one in Rez Knight Fever—if you find it, write in and tell us what the hell you did), how to kick boss booty, and a few other golden nuggets of valuable information.

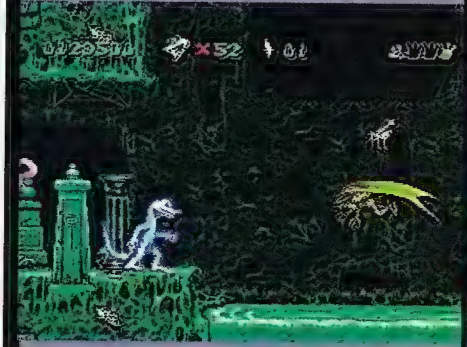
BASIC STRATEGIES

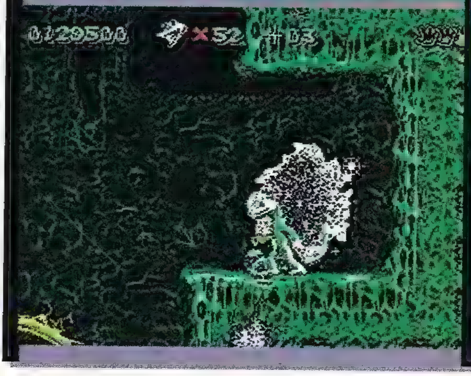
- Don't believe the instruction manual when it says that your game is saved whenever you beat a boss. The only time the game is saved is when you play through a level with a videotape and finish the level with the tape. An easy way to save after you've made some progress is to go back to the Cemetery VCR level and play through it. It's quick and easy.
- Use the bonus rounds and nearby cameras to build up your lives. Play through a bonus round to score some lives, die, and go to the bonus round again. Repeat the process until you have a good supply of extra men.

STAGE 1: CEMETERY

DISCO INFERNO

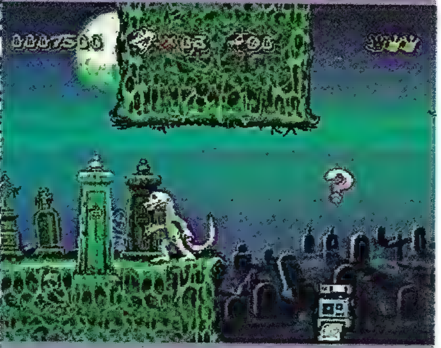
- Play through the level to the third camera and the glowing remote. Go to the right to find an area with flying gargoyles. Shoot the gargoyles with an ice power-up to freeze them, then jump across the cubes to the right. There are two portals on the right side; the lower one leads to the bonus stage. If you die while trying to make it across, go to the left on your next life to get another ice power-up.

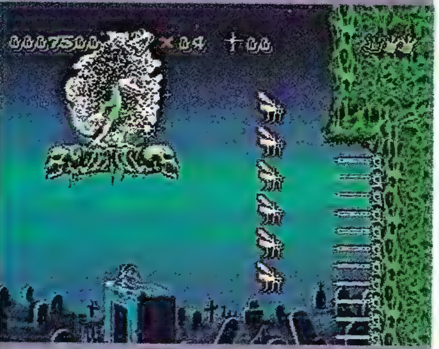




FRANKIE AND HELI

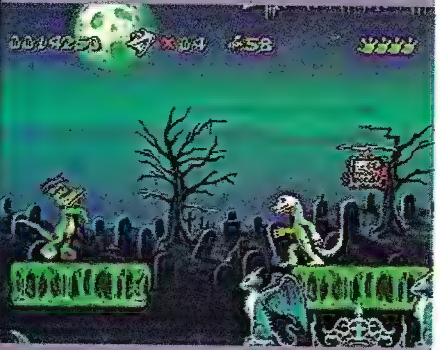
- Play through the level until you reach the camera. Climb up the wall to the left (with a few spikes inside it). Look for a floating platform to the right. Jump onto the platform and keep going to the right until you reach the bonus portal on the last platform. (FYI, the remote control is directly below it.)





GRAVE DANGER

- Look for a group of platforms, one of 'em with a Frankie on it, and two TVs to the right. Do a super-spring jump off the top TV to reach the platform above with the bonus portal.

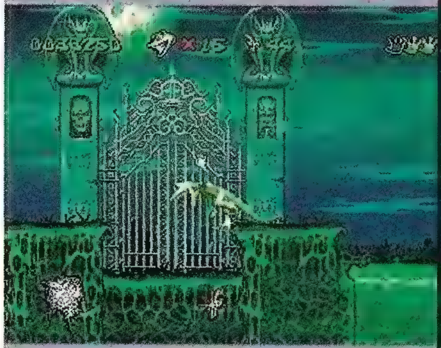


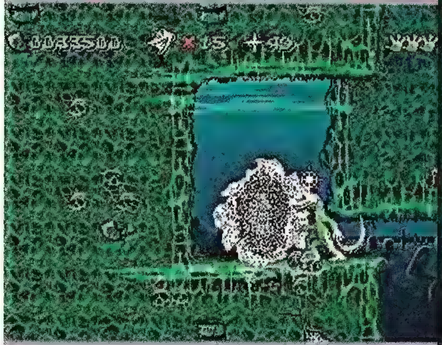
SPIN-N-PUKE (Boss)

- Tail-whip the skulls to eliminate a few of 'em, then whack the boss in the head when the skulls fly away. Avoid the side of the screen or you'll be squashed. When you take a hit, tail-whip a paw power-up to restore your energy. When the boss gets ugly, avoid the green puke and keep whipping her head.

TOMATO SOUP

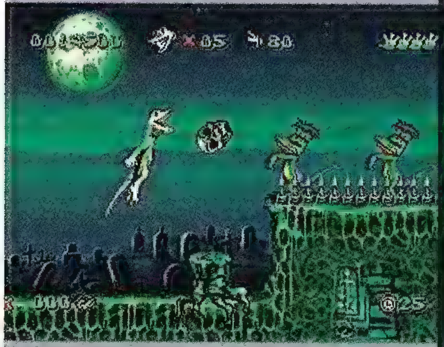
- Near the end of the level are two pillars that you must use to jump across a pool of slimy water. To the left of the pillars is a small section of collapsing floor (directly in front of the gate). Drop through the section to the bottom of a pit. Whip the tomato and climb up and left to the bonus portal.





BONUS ROUND

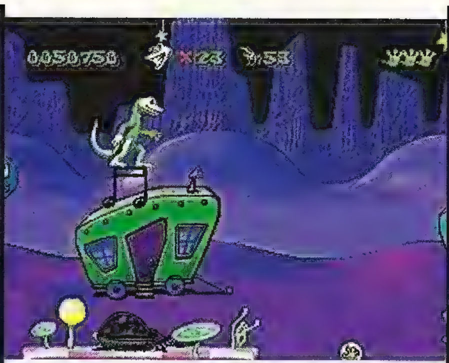
- The trick is to jump and hit the first skull before it reaches the top of the screen, giving you more than enough time to whack the second. If you're really desperate, you can jump and tail-whip the Frankies, but don't hit the spikes or you instantly end the round.

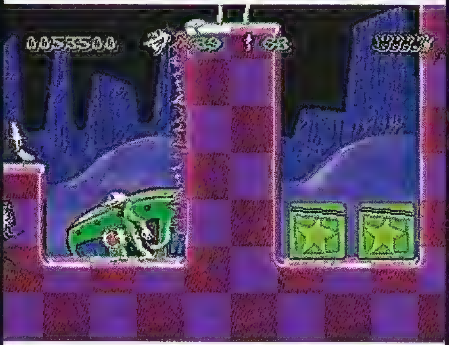


STAGE 2: NEW TOONLAND

KNOCK! KNOCK!

- When a piano crashes into the ground, jump on it to produce a large musical note. Jump onto the note and float to power-ups you otherwise can't reach.

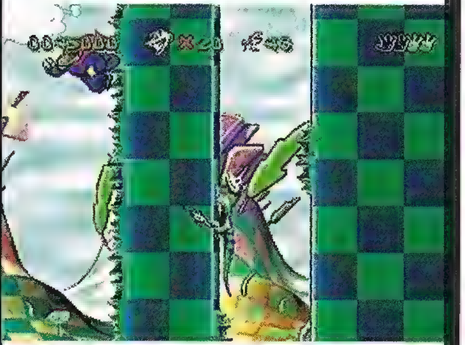


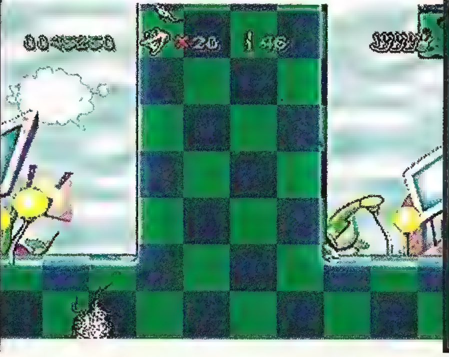


- Play through the level until you reach an area in the "dark" half with a series of spike-lined small platforms. Look for two punching boxes next to each other, and a ladybug power-up to the left. Go to the left of the power-up to find the bonus portal.

POW!

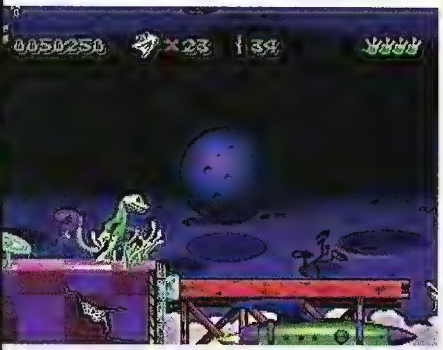
- Play through the level until you reach a narrow vertical tunnel with spikes on both sides. Climb to the top of the tunnel and break through the blocks above. Walk left into the wall and through a secret passage into the room with the bonus portal. (There's also a secret entrance on the left side of the room, through a spike wall. Check it out.)

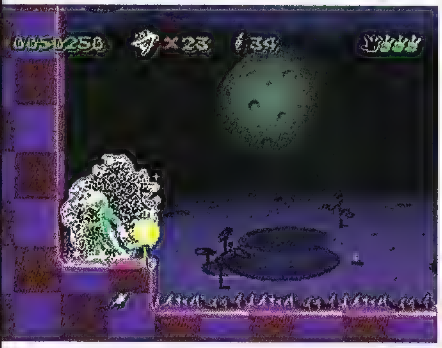




ROCK IT!

- Play through the level until you reach the third rocket. (It's also the first blue rocket.) Wait for the rocket to launch and drop straight down from where it pops out to find the bonus portal.



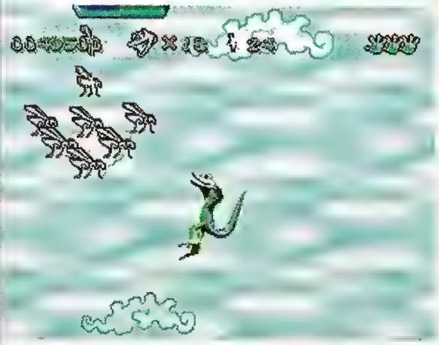


THE FLATULATOR (Boss)

- Stay in the middle of the screen and jump over the Flatulator as he lunges left and right. Time your jump to the melodious sounds of his farts. After his fourth lunge, walk to the right and duck. When he soars into the air, climb to the top of the screen and tail whip the anvils to hit the Flatulator. It takes ten hits to kill him.

TWIN TOWERS

- Climb up the level until you reach the camera with the remote control directly above it. Climb up to the remote pedestal. You should see a green block on the left. Jump across to the block, then run and fall to the left—don't jump. Look for the arrow of Golden Bugs pointing down at the small ledge with the bonus portal.



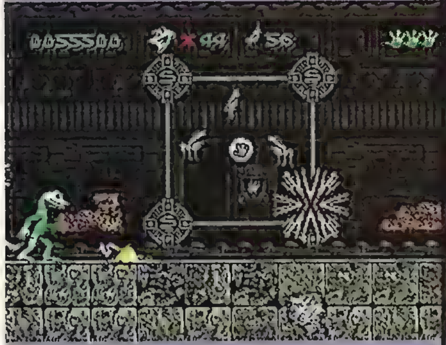
BONUS ROUND

- The key to being successful in this round is to keep going upward whenever possible, dropping downward only to get a Bug. Memorize the pattern of Bugs and when you need to switch from one side of the screen to the other to keep grabbing Bugs.

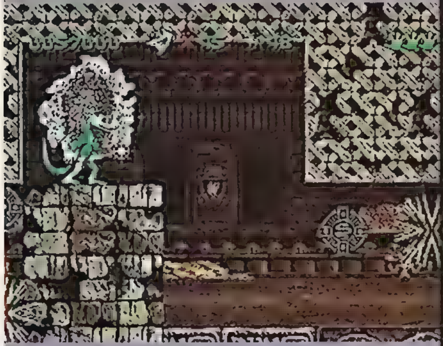
STAGE 3: JUNGLE ISLE

CONGO CHAOS

- To avoid being hurt by a spikeball here, stick Gex to a wall—he should be able to crawl past it unscathed.



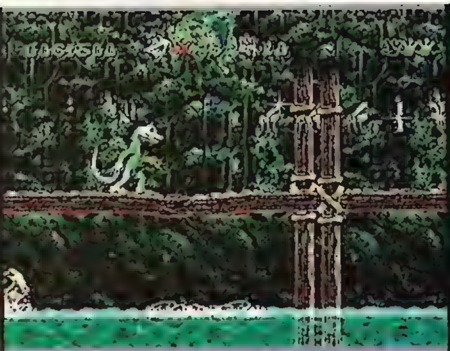
- Loo to the right of the first camera—a square spikeball with a gecko paw power-up in the center should be there. Look for two blocks that sit after this power-up. Break the bottom block, jump onto the top block, and climb up to the bonus portal. (For a different route to the bonus portal, you can also climb along the top wall, break the top block, and jump from the bottom block into the portal.)

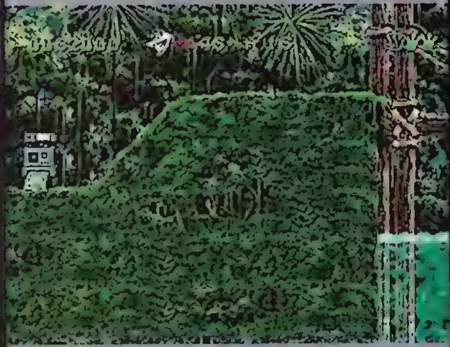


- Once you reach the end of the level and the forced scrolling stops, you can return to the left to find a few hidden items. You can go as far back as the long pit lined with spikes; but remember, if you try to cross the pit, the screen starts scrolling again.

FEEDING FRENZY

- Walk past the first camera and drop through a section of the bridge which is in mid-collapse. Swim left through the water and continue moving left until you reach a wall. Listen for the bonus portal—you can't see the bonus portal, but you can hear it.



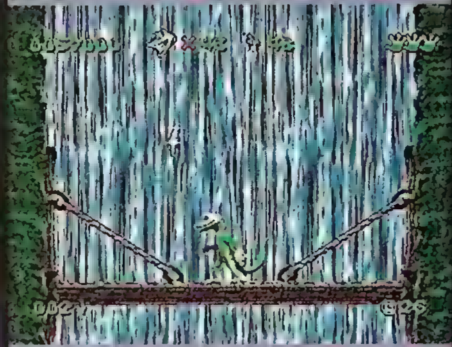


JUNGLE GYM (Boss)

- The goal here is simply to make it to the top of the screen. Most of the jumps can be done with a simple button push, but a few of them need a running start. The trick is figuring out which do and which don't. As long as you keep moving quickly, the monster won't catch up to you.

BONUS ROUND

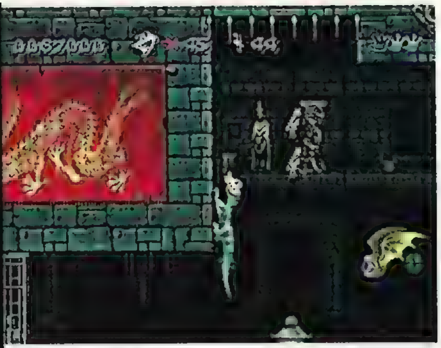
- You can catch most of the Bugs without using the tail whip. Memorize the drop pattern and keep trying 'til you get them all. Don't worry, it's not as hard as it seems.

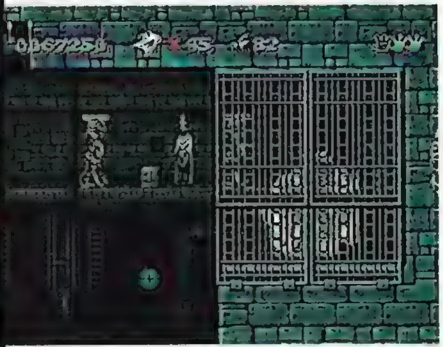


STAGE 4: KUNG FUVILLE

CHOP CHOP

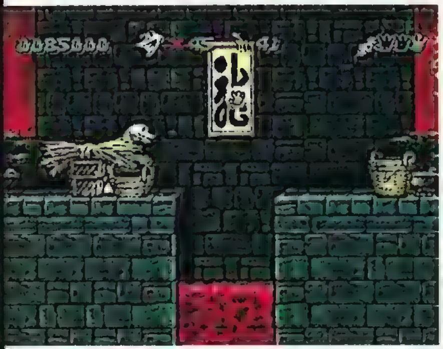
- To the right of the second camera is a group of falling platforms that lead across to one of two warp portals; jump up the platforms fast enough and you reach the higher of the two. Above those two is a third portal, the bonus portal, but you can't get to it from the platforms. Instead, look for the flying eyeball above the first platform. Super-spring off the eyeball and stick to the ceiling. Climb along the ceiling to the portal.

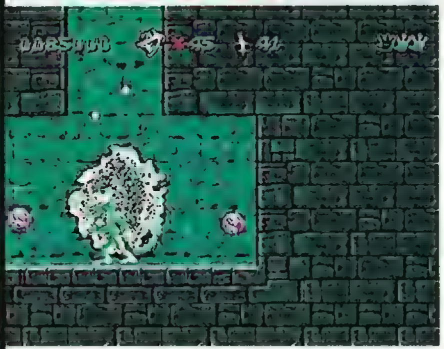




FISH BAIT

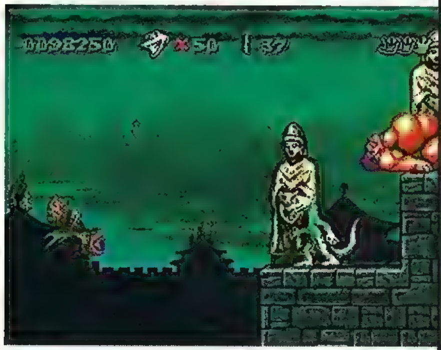
- Play through the level until you're past the second camera and the maze of spitting heads. You reach an above-water area with a small lava pool in the center. Climb onto the back wall, move as close to the lava as possible, and drop into it. You fall through the lava and into a secret area with the bonus portal. Don't drop into the lava from too high, or you lose a life.

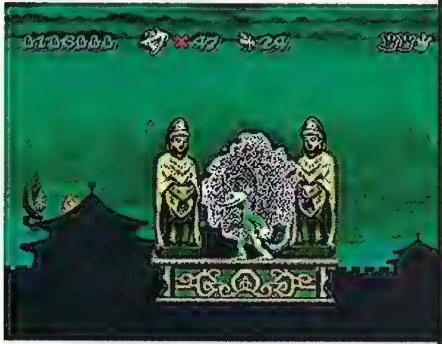




SUMO CITY

- Play through the level until you reach the third camera. Go to the right until you reach some steps with a sumo wrestler on the right and a flying eyeball on the left. Do a super-spring jump off the eyeball and bounce up and left to the platform with the bonus portal.



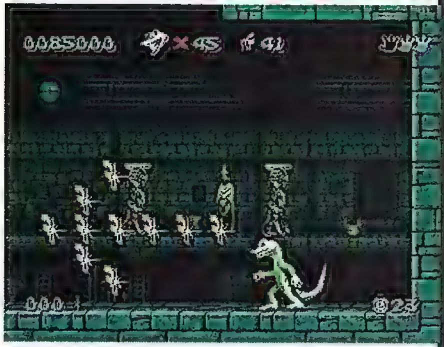


TOXIC TURTLE (Boss)

- Climb to the top of the right wall. Tail whip the turtle and drop to the ground. Run left, then right as the turtle comes down to the floor. Jump on the wall and avoid the turtle's bullets. Repeat the pattern until he's dead.

BONUS ROUND

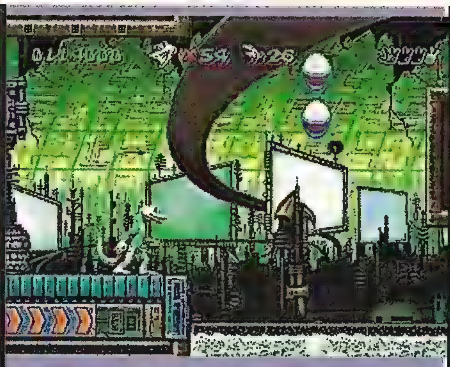
- Follow the Bug arrows and keep running throughout the round. That's it!

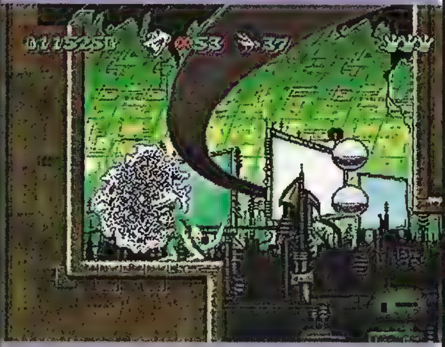


STAGE 5: REZOPOLIS

ON THE MOVE

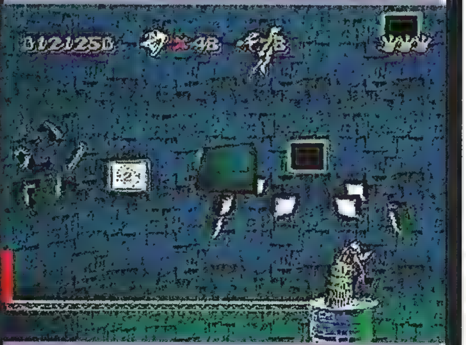
- Play through the level to the second camera. Go to the right until you need to climb upward. Scurry to the top and then bounce left across the acid bubbles to the ledge with the bonus portal. (You don't even need to bounce on the bubbles if you jump far enough to the left.)





REZ' LAIR (Boss)

- The tiny bug that you see at the start of the level is the key to defeating Rez. Avoid Rez' various attacks and wait for him to press the button on his remote control. Jump across the televisions to the bug shell on the opposite side of the screen. Tail-whip the bug shell and eat the bug. Shoot the bug at Rez to cause damage. (The best way to do this is to wait for him on the right-hand wall, and spit the bug into him just before he hits you.) Repeat the process until you hit Rez five times and win the game.



BONUS ROUND

- Face to the right and duck. Tail-whip just before the left barrel hits the ground and you smack it, along with the barrel to the right. Keep snapping until you whack all 30 barrels. You can also jump and run to whip the barrels as they fall, but this takes some expert maneuvering. Remember, you don't need all 30 barrels to get the Planet X remote piece; 27 barrels is enough.

STAGE 6: PLANET X

- Here's how to open the way to the eight hidden levels of Planet X. First off, find a bonus round portal in each stage (Cemetery, New Toonland, etc.). Second, achieve a perfect score in each bonus round. (You don't have to get a perfect score in the fifth bonus round; 27 out of 30 barrels will do.) When you've beaten all five bonus rounds with perfect scores, you get all five pieces to the Planet X remote. Minor note #1: If you get a remote piece and then die before you finish the level, you still keep the remote piece. Minor note #2: You have to collect all five pieces in one game, because *GEX* doesn't save how many pieces you've found when it saves the game.

BONUS
10/10
Perfect

- *GEX* has not one, but two ending sequences. The first, semi-lame ending is shown when you beat the game without beating every level in Planet X. The second, extremely cool ending is shown when you defeat all the Planet X levels and then defeat Rez.

NEWTON'S 5TH LAW

- If you collect all 100 Bugs, your only reward is an extra life; you don't get any other special bonus. It's just an interesting challenge.

THE PROJECT

- There are two hidden games in the giant maze, along with an exit that takes you into a room with a digitized person walking back and forth. Tail-whip the digitized dude four times to kill him. (I wonder who it is? A programmer? Dana Gould, the voice of *GEX*?) The best way to find your way through the maze is to map it with a piece of graph paper. Count each wall segment as one block, and fill in the paper as you explore. (The hidden games, by the way, kind of suck.)

CLOTHESLINE

- If you stand on the bottom of the screen without jumping or moving, you won't be hit by the poles. At the end of the level is a Japanese message. Tail-whip the message to turn it into English.

by ZaCH MESTON

3DO

MYST
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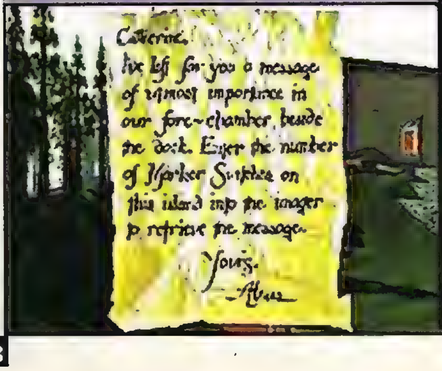
“*Myst*: The Surrealistic Adventure That Will Become Your World.” So says *Myst's* less-than-modest packaging, but hey, if you sold as many units as the PC & Mac versions of *Myst* have, you'd be bragging too. And now the world's most popular adventure game is available for the 3DO. If you're finding any of the numerous puzzles a little *too* surreal, simply read this, “The Strategy Guide That Will Restore Your Sanity.”

THE ISLAND OF MYST

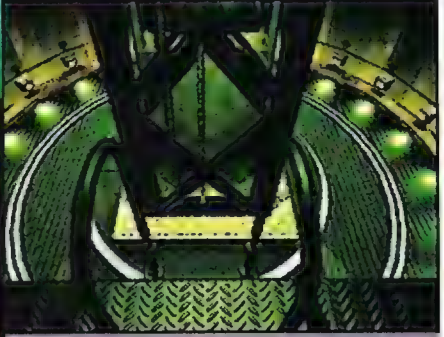
- You start the game at the dock. Walk to the end of the dock, with a stairway to your left and a switch ahead of you. Flip the switch lever to the UP position and walk up the stairway. Turn left and follow the walkway to the stairs at the opposite end. Go up the stairs and read the note on the ground. The note refers to Marker Switches, one of which you already turned on.



Catherine,
I've left for you a message
of utmost importance in
our fore-chamber, beside
the dock. Enter the number
of Marker Switches on
this island into the imager
to retrieve the message.
Yours,
—Atrus

- There are eight Marker Switches on the island, but one is out of reach at the moment. The others are located at various places around Myst. Three Switches are in the forest; one Switch is next to the gear monument near the dock; one Switch is near the note you just found; and one Switch is next to the rocket monument. Activate each Switch as you find it. When you've activated all the Switches, return to the dock where you started.
- Notice the small door in the side of the dock. Click on it to enter the fore-chamber. Walk into the chamber to find a pool. Turn around and examine the list on the wall. Press the button in the upper-left corner to reveal a panel and a two-digit counter. You can enter the numbers on the list (40, 67, and 47), or enter the number 08 to indicate the number of Switches. Press the red button to close the panel. Turn around to face the pool and press the large button to hear Atrus' message. Leave the fore-chamber and go to the library.
- In the library are a red book and a blue book. Pick up the pages and insert them into the books to hear two very garbled messages. Examine the bookshelf and read the four books. Each one describes a different Age. Next, examine the map on the wall. It's decorated with drawings that show the different landmarks on the island. Click on the flashing circle and hold the A button. A line extends from the circle and sweeps across the map. Release the button when the line changes color from white to red. The tower rotates to point at the gear monument.

- Leave the map and look at the painting of a staircase. The painting “swirls” and the bookshelf transforms into a passage. Walk through the passage to find a loudly humming elevator. Enter the elevator, close the door, and click the green button. When the elevator crashes to a halt, step off and examine both ladders. One ladder leads to a window that shows what the tower is aimed at, while the other gives a clue as to how to access the Age that the targeted location represents.



- Return to the map and repeat the process of rotating the line until it turns red, using the elevator, and climbing the ladders to learn the clues. (There are four locations on the map.) When you've seen all four, return to the library and click on the second painting to close the secret passage and reopen the library doors. You can now visit the four Ages in any order.

ENTERING THE CHANNELWOOD AGE

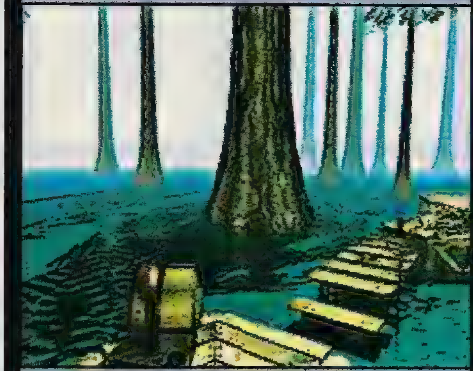
- Go to the forest cabin. Examine the safe and enter the combination (724). Pull down the lever to open the safe. Open the box of matches inside and take one out. Strike the match against the box to light it. Turn around and walk to the furnace on the other side of the cabin. Move the match into the pilot light in the lower-left corner of the furnace.

- The furnace controls the tree just outside the cabin, which has an elevator inside it. Turning the red wheel clockwise or counterclockwise turns the furnace up or down. Start out by turning the wheel all the way to the right. When the elevator reaches the top, the furnace needle stops moving. Turn the wheel to the left and the elevator starts to fall. Hurry outside and jump into the elevator when it reaches your level.

- The elevator slowly takes you down into the basement. Read the book to enter the Channelwood Age. (To get out of the basement, use the wheel. You can get out at the cabin or ride all the way to the top. To get down from the top, press and hold the button inside the elevator door.)

THE CHANNELWOOD AGE

- Wander around to locate a circular staircase, an elevator, and a windmill. Go to the windmill and turn the faucet at the bottom of the tank. This starts the windmill pumping water. Use the pipe switches on the walkway to direct the water into the pump next to the elevator. (The red lever on each switch indicates where the water is *not* flowing.) Enter the elevator and click on the door to close it. Pull the red switch to ride up to the trees. Walk around and explore the buildings. One of them has a red lever. Pull the lever and you can see the door of the circular staircase as it unlocks.
- Walk down the staircase and open the door. Reset the pipe switches to direct the water into the pump at the bottom of the staircase. Climb the stairs and get into the elevator. Click on the door and pull the red switch to ride up to the second level. Walk around and explore more buildings. Look for the red page in a desk drawer near a window (see the windmill?), and the right half of a torn note inside the bed drawer. Look for the blue page near a strange machine.
- Return to the ground level and reset the pipe switches to direct the water into the dead-end walkway. Pull the handle on the pump to make a bridge appear. Cross the bridge and walk forward to find another elevator. Turn the hand crank near the elevator to extend a pipe across the water. Reset the pipe switches yet again to direct the water through the new pipe. Enter the elevator and ride up to the Myst book. Return to the library and place the red or blue page into the appropriate book. (Return to the Age to retrieve the other page.)



ENTERING THE MECHANICAL AGE

- Walk to the shore across the water from the clock. Use the wheels to set the clock to 2:40. The left wheel sets the minute hand (five minutes per turn), and the right wheel sets the hour hand. When the clock is set, press the red button to create a gear bridge to the clock. Turn on the eighth Marker Switch and go inside.

- You need to pull the levers to change the three counters to the proper access code (221). When you pull the left lever, the bottom two counters increase by one (or wrap around from 3 to 1). When you pull the middle lever, the top two counters increase by one. When you pull the right lever, everything is reset. Here's the tricky part: if you *hold* a lever, the middle counter continues to increase. To enter the code, pull the left lever once and the right lever twice, holding on to the right lever the second time you pull it. Leave the clock and walk to the gear monument near the dock. Read the book to enter the Mechanical Age.

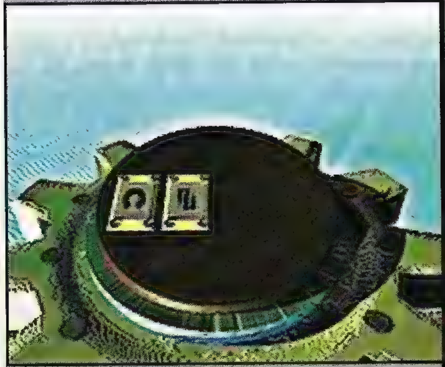
THE MECHANICAL AGE

- You start next to a large gear with a combination lock. Walk to the fortress in the distance and go inside. There are two rooms inside the fortress; one with weapons and the other with a model and spy glass. The weapons room has a fortress rotation simulator. The left lever controls the speed of rotation, and the right lever turns the rotation on and off. When you rotate and then stop the tower, it settles on the cardinal direction (north, south, east, or west) that it's closest to. To the left of the chair in the room is a secret panel. Open it and enter the secret room to find the blue page. Go to the model room and open another secret panel, this one behind the tapestry to the right of the chair. The red page is inside the chest in the corner.

FORTRESS
ROTATION
SIMULATOR
CALIBRATING

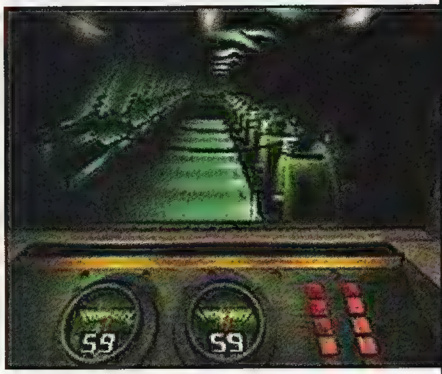
- Go to the elevator between the two rooms. Press the red button to reveal stairs. Walk down the stairs to a circular indicator and a lever. Hold the lever until the indicator turns (and stays) red. Go back upstairs and press the red button to close the stairway. Walk straight ahead and into the elevator. Press the arrow pointing up to activate the elevator and go to the top of the fortress. Press the square button between the arrows and quickly step off the elevator. The elevator lowers to reveal the fortress rotation controls on the top.

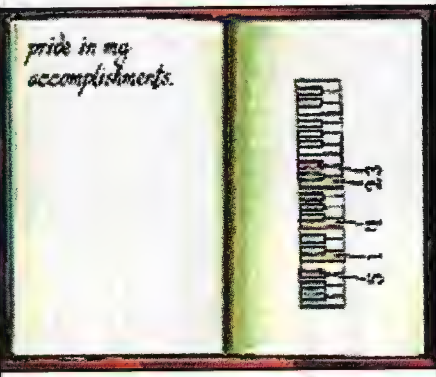
- Examine the controls and use them to rotate the fortress to each of the four cardinal directions. Listen for the different sounds to know when you've stopped in a particular direction—they're the same sounds as in the simulator. Press the red button on the controls, then exit the fortress and walk outside to examine the combination picture. You should see all four parts of the picture combination. Rotate the fortress to the south and return to the combination lock. From left to right, enter a horseshoe, triangle-square-triangle, three triangles and a dot, and half-circle. Press the red button to open the stairway. Walk down the stairway to find the Myst book. (Remember to grab the red or blue page before leaving.)



ENTERING THE SELENITIC AGE

- Go to the power station (the yellow building). Walk through the passage to reach a door. Press the button and examine the control panel. Each of the ten red buttons adds a different voltage to the total. The voltages for the left column of buttons (from top to bottom) are: 10, 7, 8, 16, 5. The voltages for the right column are: 1, 2, 22, 19, 9. You need a setting of 59 volts. Press the following buttons in order: 2, 16, 19, 22. Leave the power station and go to the rocket. (If the power goes off because of excessive voltage, you've blown a circuit breaker. Climb the two towers along the edge of the island and flip the breaker switch. Return to the power station and try again.)
- The Selenitic Age book in the library has a picture of a keyboard that looks suspiciously like the one inside the rocket. Play the notes on the keyboard in the same order as the book. Turn around and examine the five sliders. Position the sliders so they play the same tones as the ones on the keyboard. Pull the lever and a book appears in the window above the controls. Read the book to enter the Selenitic Age.

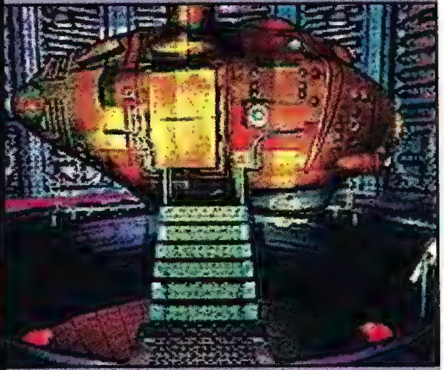




THE SELENITIC AGE

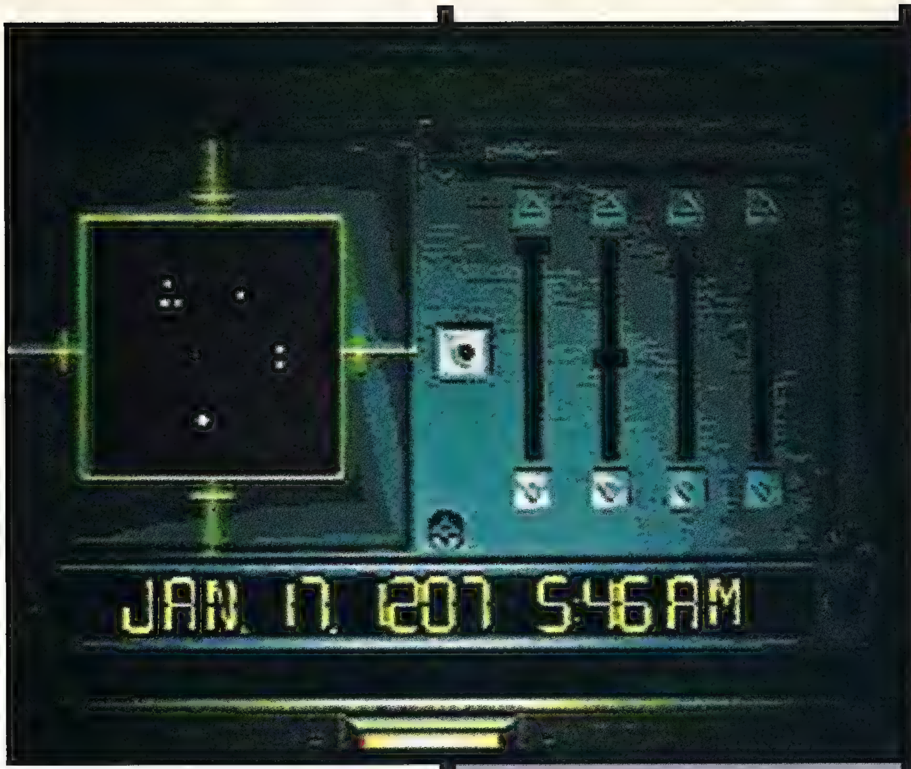
- Explore the island to find five symbols, each one with a red button. Press each button as you come across it, and try to remember the area around each symbol. You'll find the red and blue pages as you explore. The red page is near the crystal, on top of the symbol. The blue page is near the waterfall, on a bench. When you've pressed all five buttons, go to the tunnel near the wind symbol and climb down the ladder. Flip the light switch at the bottom and walk through the tunnel. Climb the ladder on the other side and enter the tower.

- The tower can tune in sounds from all over the island, but you need to aim the tower. Click on a symbol, then use the arrow buttons to aim. One of the arrow buttons flashes when you're close to the sound. When the sound is perfectly tuned, both arrows stops flashing. Click on the next symbol to tune it in. Here are the coordinates for all five symbols: 153.4, 130.3, 55.6, 15.0, 212.2. When you have all five symbols tuned in, press the button at the bottom of the screen and memorize the sequence of sounds.
- Return to the small building at the start of the Age and enter the sequence of sounds into the lock by adjusting the sliders. Press the button and enter the building to find a bizarre vehicle called a Mazerunner. Enter the Mazerunner and sit in the driver's seat. Press the FORWARD button to enter the maze. Each sound (or combination of sounds) you hear indicates the direction you should move in. A "ding" sound means you should go north; a "chirp" means west; a "boing" means east; and a "clank" means south. Click on the speaker to hear the sound(s) again. Take this path through the maze: N, W, N, E, E, S, S, W, SW, W, NW, NE, N, SE. Get out of the Mazerunner and walk forward to find the Myst book.



ENTERING THE STONESHIP AGE

- Go to the planetarium. Press the blue button next to the door to turn off the lights. Sit in the chair and enter the dates and times you learned at the start of the game. If you forgot 'em, here they are again: October 11, 1984, 10:04 AM; January 17, 1207, 5:46 AM; November 23, 9791, 6:57 PM. Press the flashing button after you enter each date to view the night sky. Go to the library and read the Stoneship Age book to compare the star formations you just saw to the ones in the book. Each formation has a symbol. Go to the columns outside the library and click on the maple leaf, snake, and bug symbols. (If a symbol is green when the cursor



moves over it, it's on.) The ship at the dock rises out of the water. Go to the ship and enter the room below decks. Read the book to enter the Stoneship Age.

THE STONESHIP AGE

• Walk along the planks to the island with the umbrella. Each of the three buttons drains out an area normally blocked by water. The left button drains the cabin on the ship; the middle button drains the two underground tunnels; and the right button drains the lighthouse. Push the right button and walk along the planks to the lighthouse. Go down the stairs to the chest. Open the spigot to empty the chest, then close the spigot again. Return to the umbrella and turn off the right button. Return to the lighthouse and the chest has floated up to the key. Ain't that nifty! Use the key to open the chest and find the key to the tower. Climb the ladder and use the key in the padlock. Open the door and climb into the tower.

• Turn on the generator by cranking it until the indicator on the battery turns white. (The light on top also changes color.) The battery holds a charge for about ten minutes. When it goes out, you need to return and crank the generator again. Go to the umbrella and push the middle button. Turn around and enter the tunnels. One room has the blue page on the bed and a torn note inside one of the drawers. The other room has the red page in a chest of drawers. After you find the note (and pick up a page), leave the tunnels. Climb to the telescope at the top of the stairway of planks. Use the telescope to look for the lighthouse. (It's at 135 degrees.)

• Return to the tunnels and look for a secret door in the wall. (It has a small red marking on it.) Open the door and enter the room to find a compass. Click on the thirteenth button clockwise from due north and a light goes on. Return to the umbrella and push the left switch. Return to the ship and enter the cabin. Go all the way down to the lowest level and click on the table to make the Myst book appear.

THE ENDGAME

• At this point, you should have placed five red and five blue pages into the books. Both brothers tell you to enter pattern 158 into the fireplace. Look up the pattern in the far right book on the middle shelf. Examine the fireplace and press the red button to close it. Recreate the pattern and press the button again. The fireplace rotates to reveal a secret chamber with the final red and blue pages, along with the green book the brothers warned you not to read. Ignore their advice and read the book to get the whole sordid story from Atrus.

• Now read the instructions you saw on the two torn notes. Turn all the Marker Switches to the ON position (which you should have already done), then turn the Switch at the dock OFF. Take the white page inside the Switch and return to the green book. Enter the world of Dunny and give the white page to Atrus. You win the game and are rewarded by getting to explore the world of Myst at your whim. (For a bad ending, use the final blue or red page to free an evil son, or enter Dunny without the white page.)

by ERIC HOLMa

Virtua Fighter 2

While the majority of arcade fighting games borrow too heavily from either *Street Fighter II* or *Mortal Kombat* to boast any true innovation or originality, Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series has managed to avoid such thievery and is still the most unique punch-fest on the block. While *Virtua Fighter 2* is slightly slower than games like *Killer Instinct* or *MK II*, it requires more skill to master. It is a complex contest of moves and counters that stays true to its martial arts foundation without the gratuitous use of fictional weaponry or unrealistic combat.

So don't cower in fear in the corner of the arcade while others knock opponent after opponent on their butts. Step up to a *Virtua Figher 2* machine and get in the ring—and after reading this complete strategy guide, *you'll* be the one kicking ass and leaving bootprints!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 BASICS

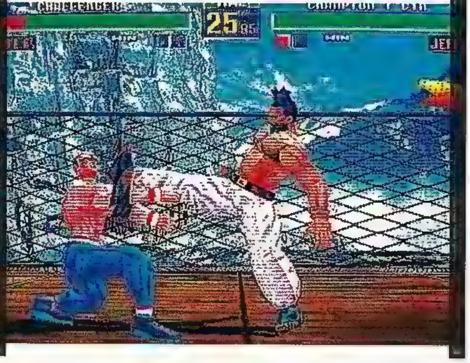
Most *VF2* machines offer the typical Best 2 out of 3 rounds battle, but the arcade operator has the option of changing it to 3 out of 5, 4 out of 7, or even 5 out of 9.

Beating the crap out of your opponent is not the only way to win at *Virtua Fighter 2*: you can also win by a "Ring Out." This happens when you knock your opponent out of the ring, causing their disqualification. Some consider it cheap, others just accept it as part of the game.

If the battle ends in a tie, then you go to a Sudden Death round where the ring is 1/16 the size of a normal ring. Your goal here is to Ring Out your opponent—to accomplish this, all you have to do it hit them. Quick reflexes win this one.

FIGHTING BASICS

Virtua Fighter 2's button configuration is quite simple: just a Punch, Kick and Defend. But this doesn't mean there are only three moves in the game. For example, If you keep pressing Punch, you can deliver multiple punches quickly. Kick boots the guy in the head. Defend defends against most attacks, but you'll get pushed backwards by the attack and risk falling out of the ring. Low attacks go under a regular Defend, like sweeps. If you crouch and hit Punch, you'll do a low jab, which can be useful to stop foes from coming to close. Same with the crouching kick. Crouching and defending will stop low attacks like sweeps.



MOVEMENT

Movement is another key element to winning. Hit twice in a direction to quickly move in that direction, hit twice and hold in that direction to run. Just hold in a direction to move slowly.

AIR ATTACKS

Progressing on the scale of necessary basics, we go to air attacks. Unlike some games where jumping equals certain death, aerial attacks in *VF 2* can be useful if used correctly. You'll do different attacks depending on when you hit either punch or kick. Try hitting Punch and Kick before and after reaching the top of your jump to see different effects. Here's some handy ones: hold forward and hit K before the top of your jump, and you'll do a dropkick, hold back and hit K and you do a dropkick to the back.

CHAMPION 1 WIN
24
CHALLENGER

Sometimes you get turned around and your opponent is behind you. Hitting Defend won't do anything, they can go berserk on you if you're looking the other way and you're defenseless. Hitting Punch or Kick will turn you around with a punch or a kick. Hold the joystick Down first and you'll get a low attack.

Another situation you're bound to find yourself in is flat on your ass. Holding Up will jump your guy up, but that's not your only option. Hitting Kick will bring you up with a kick. Away and Kick will roll you away with a kick, diagonally Away and Kick rolls you away with a sweep. Back, Forward and Kick does different interesting things depending on which character you are.

Of course, if it's the other guy sprawled out on the canvas, you don't have to wait for them to get up to attack again. Hit Up and Punch and you'll do a quick pounce onto your opponent. Hold Up and hit Punch and you'll do a high pounce that does more damage, but it also gives your opponent a lot of time to get out of the way, so be fast.

THE KEY TO THROWING MOVES

Look at the foot position of both fighters. While this may be really annoying at first, and will probably cause you to get stomped while you're looking at your opponent's feet, you'd better get used to it. To do a close throw while your opponent is defending, your feet and theirs should NOT be a mirror image: your front foot should be lined up with their BACK foot, and your back foot lined up with their FRONT foot. If the feet are not lined up correctly, try moving away, then coming back in, or just moving around. Or you can run into them, thus giving you correct foot positioning to properly execute a throw.

Another note about throws, everyone has a throw they can do by pressing Punch and Defend. This is the easiest throw to do, and you can usually use it when someone whiffs a high attack and you duck.

FIGHTER MOVES

Key:
F = Forward
B = Back
U = Up
D = Down
P = Punch
K = Kick
DF = Defend
a, b = Do 'a' then 'b'
a+b = Do 'a' and 'b' at the same time
a/b = Both 'a' and 'b' (e.g. F/D = Diagonally F and D)
Note: Hold D+P+K is read as 'Hold Down and hit Punch and Kick' not 'Hold Down and hold Punch and hold Kick'

AKIRA

Dashing Elbow Strike: F, F+P
and change foot position: F, F, F+P
Dashing Palm Strike: Hold D, F+P
Double Palm Strike: Hold D, B, F+P
Elbow Smash: F+P
Dashing Body Check: B, F, F+P+K
Uppercut: F/D, F/D+P
Punch fallen opponent: F/D+P

Stun Palm: All three buttons
Better Stun Palm: All, B, F/D+P+K, B+P
Surprise: B/D+P+DF
Break: F+P+DF
Shake: B+P+DF
Hard Shake: D+P+DF
Ram: F, B, F+P+K
Pull-Push: B/D, F+P
Reverse Uppercut: B/D, F+P+K
Stumble Toss: B, D+P+DF

PAI

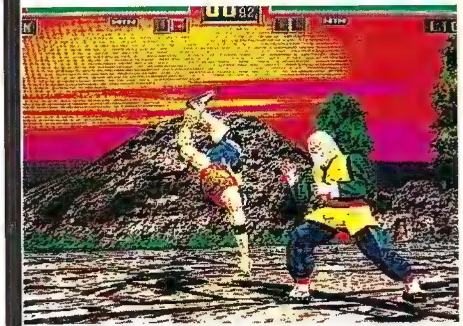
Rising Heel Kick: Hold D, release+K
Superkick: DF+K
Reverse Superkick: B+DF+K
Kickflip: U/B+K
Backflip: U/B
Leg Thrust: F, F+K
Chop: F/D+P
Snap Kick: F+K
Leaping Scissors Kick: U/F+K (you can add another K after)
Foot jabbing: B, B+P
Punch fallen opponent: F/D+P
DDT: F, D+P
Stomach Throw: B, D+P+DF
Throw and Punch: F, F+P+K
Pushover: B, F+P
Cartwheel: F+All

LAU

Rising Heel Kick: Hold D, release+K
Superkick: DF+K
Sweep: Hold D+K+DF
Knife Hand: F/D, F/D+P
Cartwheel Kick: U/F+K
Jump Kick: U/F+K+DF
Kickflip: U/B+K
Backflip: U/B
Elbow Smash: F+P
Snap Kick: F+K
Slide Attack: F, D+K
Foot Stomp on fallen opponent: F/D+K
Piggyback Drop: B+P
Head Slam: B, F+P
Sideways Throw: B, D+P+DF

WOLF

Knee: F+K
Uppercut: F/D+P
Low Uppercut: Hold F/D+P
Clothesline: F, F+P
Shoulder Block: B, F+P
Backhand: B+P
Back Brain Kick (Ghetto Blaster): K+D
Somersault Kick: B, F+K+DF



Roundhouse: F+K+DF
High Knee: F, F+K+DF
Dropkick: U/F+K
Body Blow: F+P
Elbow Drop: B+P+K
Slide Attack: F, D+K
Two Hand Slap: Hold D, F+P
Elbow Drop on fallen opponent: F/D+P
Senton on fallen opponent: B/U+K
Body Slam: F+P
Giant Swing: B, D/B, D, F/D, F+P (otherwise known as the "Twirl N Hurl")
Ghostbuster: F/D, F/D+P+K
Frankensteiner: U/F+K+DF
Butterfly Suplex: D/B+All
Tombstone Piledriver: F/D+All
Takedown: D+P+DF
German Suplex Variation: All

JEFFRY

Toe Kick Of Doom: D+K, D, F/D, F+All

Uppercut: F/D+P (add another P if you want)
Low Uppercut: Hold F/D+P
Toe Kick: D+K (add a P after for a hammer)
Elbow Smash: F+P
Low Elbow: F, F+P
Foot Thrust: F, F+K
Heel Smash: F, D+K
Knee: F+K
Elbow Drop: B, F+P
Lunging Elbow Drop: B, F/D+P
Headbutt: F+P+K
Headbutt Thrust: B/D, F+P+K
Flying Butt Pliers: All
Foot Stomp: F/D+K
Powerslam: F+P
Press Slam: B+P+DF
Crucifix Piledriver: F/D, F/D+P+K
Triple Headbutt: B, F+P+K, F+P+K, F+P+K
Backbreaker: B, F, F+All
Clawhold: D+P
Knee Smashes: Hold D, F+K
Powerbomb: F/D+All

KAGE

Elbow Smash: F+P
Heel Kick: D+K+DF
Rising Knee: Hold D, F+K
Back Kickflip: U/B+K
Kickflip: U/B+K+DF
Backflip: U/B
Heel Sweep: F, F+K
Flying Kick: F, F+All
Flying Corkscrew Kick: F, F+K+DF
Cartwheel: B+DF
Back Thrust: B+K+DF
Slide Attack: B, B/D, D+K
Slashing Shuto: B, F+P+K
Slashing Shikan-ken: D+P+K
Chopping Shuto: Hold D, F+P+K
Turning High Back Thrust: B, B+K
Turning Downwards Chop: B, B+P
Turning Toe Slide: B, B+K+DF
Turning Upwards Chop: B, B+P+DF
Heel Smash on fallen opponent: F/D+K
Ten Foot Toss: B+P
Throw: B, F+P
Toka Toss: All

SARAH

Elbow Smash: F+P
Knee: F+K
Rising Knee: Hold D, F+K
Lunging Knee: F, F+K
Big Punt: D+K
Two Shadow Kicks: Hold F/D+K, K
Side Kick: D+K+DF
Kickflip: U/B+K
Backflip: U/B
Roundhouse: U+K
Leaping Roundhouse: U/F+K
Tornado Kick: U/F+K+DF
Double Kick: B+K
Downward Superkick: K+DF
Hook Kick: B/D+K+DF
Turning Punch: B, B+P
Turning Jump Kick: B, B+K
Spinning Heel Kick: Hold D, B+K
Backfist: F/D+P
Leaping Clothesline: F, F+P
Kick fallen opponent: F/D+K

JACKY

Elbow Smash: F+P
Spinning Backfist: B/D+P
Knee: F+K
Kickflip: U/B+K
Backflip: U/B
Toe Kick: D+K
Punt: F, F+K
Superkick: K+DF
Side kick: D+K+DF
Hook: F/D+P
Side Hook: B+K
Bitch Slap: P+K
Spinning Mid Kick: B, F+K+DF
Turning Hook: B, B+P
Spin Half Crescent: B, B+K
Leaping Clothesline: F, F+P
Kick fallen opponent: F/D+K

SHUN

Uppercut: F/D+P
Dashing Uppercut: Hold F/D+P
Lunging Punch: Hold D, F+P
Running Punches: F+P
Backpush: B/D+P
Scorpion Kick: D+K+DF
Twisting Back Hook Fist: B+P
Backflip: U/B
Cartwheel Kick: F, F+K
Jumping Back Hammer: U+P
Backwards Jumping Back Hammer: U/B+P
Mule Kick: U+K
Spinning Scissors Kick: U/F+K
Spinning Twist Punch: U/F+P
Jumping Spin Kick: K+DF
Two Hand Push: P+K
Breakdance Sweep: B/D+K+D
(with foot position change): Hold D+K+DF
Backwards Hopping Kicks: B+K+DF
Handstand: F, F/D, D, B/D, B (hit K to kick)
Kick And Fall: B+K
Low Back Kick: B/D+K
Falling Twist Kicks: B/D, B/D+K
Sit Down: D, D (hit K to kick)
Grab and fall while elbowing: All

LION

Elbow Smash: F+P
Knee: F+K
Uppercut: F/D+P
Long Range Fist Thrust: F, F+P
Spin Forward & High Kick: F, F+K+DF
Spin Forward & Low Kick: F/D+K+DF
Head Poke From Above: B+P
Head Poke: F+P+DF
Wind Up Attack: F/D+P+DF
Sweep: Hold D+K+DF
Dancing Kick: U+K
Handstand Kicks: D, D+K
Cartwheel Kick: U/F+K
Leaping Downward Swipe: U/F+P
Backward Leaping Downward Swipe: U/B+P
Arm Swing: U+P
Backwards Cartwheel: U/B
Low Swipe Kick: D+K
Turn Kick: B, B+K
Turn Punch: B, B+P
Turn With Side Kick: B, B+K+DF
High Spinning Side Attack: DF, F+P
Side Spin And Trip: DF, F/D+P
Throw: B+P+K
Grab And Toss: F, F+P+DF
Front Piggyback Attack: F, F/D, D, B/D, B+P+DF

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO KNOW

RANKING MODE

If you're fighting the computer, you can invoke Ranking Mode, where the computer will grade you on your performance. If you finish the game, or at least beat Akira (the first fighter), the computer will offer tips on your playing. To enter Ranking Mode tap all three buttons and Start together.

EXPERT MODE

Cruisin' for a bruisin'? Then turn up the difficulty by entering Expert Mode—the computer will *really* kick your ass! To enter Expert Mode, go to the character selection screen. Tap Down, Down, Up, Up, Left, Left, Right, Right. You'll hear a "Yahoo!" to confirm that it worked. Good luck—you're gonna need it.

CHOOSE YOUR TAUNTS

During the replay, hold down Punch, Kick or Defend to select a taunt to deliver at the end. Try all three taunts to find your favorite.

SLO-MO REPLAY

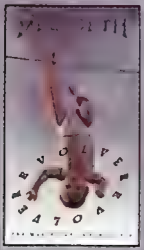
Did you finish off your opponent with a spectacular move and want to rub it in? Hold down all three buttons before the replay starts, and you'll see it in slow motion. You can only do this once per fight.

[Special thanks to Chia Jin Ngee and the Teddy Bear arcade, Boston.]

MEGADETH

TURN IT UP AND FEEL THE
BLOOD RUSH TO YOUR HEAD

YOUTHANASIA
THE PLATINUM ALBUM
Produced by Max Norman & Dave Mustaine for Zeus Produce
Mixed by Max Norman & Dave Mustaine



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Megadeth's Capitol debut
Platinum

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Platinum

RUST IN PEACE
Platinum

COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION
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MEGADETH, ARIZONA, http://bazaar.com

Capitol.

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FUTURESHOCK

an insider's look at the fate of the 16-bit platform and future of the 32-bit mega-systems

by Jeff Kitts

You've spent years building a library of SNES and Genesis games. Bought a few controllers, maybe a Game Genie or two. Last year you fell victim to all the hype and got a 32X, and chances are you're still waiting for the good games to appear. And to all the Sega CD owners, all we can do is give our condolences. To make matters worse, every magazine you pick up is packed to the gills with one thing: the forthcoming hardware war between the Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation and Nintendo's Ultra 64. The Super-Systems. The Next Generation Of Gaming. Nope, no one's talking about your lowly SNES or Genesis anymore.

So what exactly is going to happen to those 16-bit platforms you've cherished for so long? Is it time to put 'em in the attic with the ColecoVision? To help shed some light on these and other questions regarding the fate of the 16-bit systems, FLUX went straight to such companies as Sega, Nintendo, Capcom and Accolade and asked about their plans for the future—and whether or not 16-bit games remain a viable commodity.

SEGA™

John Gillin
Director Of Marketing, Sega

FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit titles will Sega be producing in 1995?

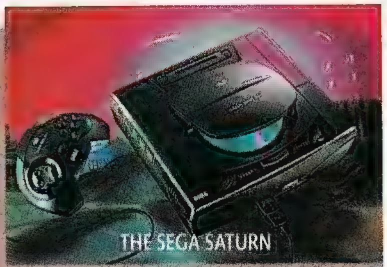
"We'll probably be releasing about 75% of the number of titles that we did last year. A lot of that is fueled by the fact that, with our other platforms, we have to allocate our resources effectively. We're still very committed to the 16-bit marketplace. It's been the bread and butter of this company for the past five or six years, and **we have a very strong loyalty to our 16-bit consumers.** While Sega will continue to push the envelope on new technological developments and continue to provide the gamer with the most cutting-edge experience possible, we still feel very strongly about all of our 16-bit consumers and we'll continue to work aggressively to deliver them entertainment experiences as well."

FLUX: Does that also apply to the Sega CD and 32X?

"Yes. We will also continue producing titles for both platforms."

FLUX: Do you think the Sega CD and 32X will be viable platforms in the next year or two?

"Yes. Both platforms fill consumer niches for us. Right now we've got about 15 million Genesis units out there, and a fair number of them are still used—but for a lot of those users who may want to upgrade to a new level of gaming, they may go to the store and realize that they don't want to spend the money on a Saturn or a PlayStation, so they'll be looking for alternative entertainment opportunities. That's where the Sega CD and 32X come in—to provide the Genesis owners with a very nice upgrade path without having to spend the amount of money they would need to spend in order to reach the next generation of gaming."


THE SEGA SATURN

FLUX: Does Sega plan to bring some of its Saturn titles to the Genesis, Sega CD or 32X?

"We will try, although at this point we have no specific plans to do that. We're going to wait and see how the Saturn does on its own and how the title lineup performs before we begin thinking of doing any port-overs to other platforms. Saturn is a very unique platform with some very unique processing capabilities, and at this point we're just focusing on producing the right kind of software for the system."

FLUX: Since its release, the Saturn has sold extremely well in Japan. Did Sega expect this kind of success?

"We knew we had a fantastic platform, and I know that our headquarters in Japan had very high expectations—and we were all quite pleased when we did meet those expectations. The Saturn is still outselling the PlayStation 5 to 3 in Japan."

FLUX: Can you explain the Japanese success?

"I think it was the fact that we were delivering a very new and unique entertainment experience in the marketplace. In the 16-bit arena, Sega had never been quite as strong in Japan we were in the U.S., and a lot of that was because Nintendo had some very strong distribution in Japan. With the Saturn now out, the Japanese consumers realize what the technology delivers, and we were able to overcome some distribution handicaps that we had with the 16-bit platform."

FLUX: Given the success of the Saturn in Japan, how confident is Sega that the system will do well in the U.S.?

"The key phrase in this industry has always been 'software sells hardware.' The Atari Jaguar still does not have a real vast library of games, and I don't think there are going to be many third party publishers signing up to make Jaguar games in the near future. 3DO had a very slow start and was hampered by two things: the fact that it came out at an $800 price point, and the fact that there really wasn't much of a library for the first nine months to a year. To this point, Sega has been the only hardware manufacturer that has aggressively created software to go with it. We have a reputation for our excellence in software development and we have a lot of internal development going on, plus a lot of great alliances with our strong third parties. So we plan to introduce the Saturn with a fantastic library of games to support it.

"But I think the consumers are ready. **It's no secret that we've seen a slowdown in the 16-bit market,** and I think everyone is waiting for the next big thing to hit. And I am confident that the Saturn will be the next big thing."

FLUX: Over the years, there have been some truly awful games released for the Genesis. With regard to the Saturn, has Sega stepped up its standard to keep bad games from being made?

"Sure. As a marketer in the video game industry, you really go through changes in how you evaluate software. During the early part of a system's life cycle, you work very hard to make sure you have nothing but top-quality software to support your launch because you want to show off your hardware system as best as possible. So our review standards for the Saturn are very strict—and you have to balance that against building enough of a library to give people that choice when they buy the hardware. But we are very carefully examining our third party submissions, as well as our internal development, to make sure we're all meeting some very high standards. And I think the consumers are going to be blown away when they see the software we have coming out for the Saturn."

George Harrison, Director Of Marketing And Corporate Communications, Nintendo

FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit titles will Nintendo be producing in 1995?

"In 1995 we'll have about 12 SNES titles, and that's about even with last year. We really view the fate of the SNES 16-bit platform as somewhat safe in our control, because it really has to do with how committed a company is to producing software. And platforms usually begin to suffer when companies walk away and stop making software. We still get people a lot of requests from people who want more NES games—and it's not that the NES isn't a fun machine, it's just that there's a finite number of developers willing to make NES games at this point. But we plan to keep the SNES owners out there happy for as long as we can without just abandoning them and moving onto something else. And we see at least two more good years for the SNES and maybe a third.

"We recently introduced the idea of computer modeling to video games, and we want to continue to take advantage of that. When people see the kinds of computer modeled games we have coming out, they're going to look at them and say, 'If I can get this for $60 or $70, why should I go out and spend $400 on a new machine?'

"If you go back to a little bit of history, when the 16-bit systems were first introduced—the Genesis came out first and the SNES came out about a year and a half later—the year after the SNES was introduced was actually our biggest year ever for the 8-bit NES system. And it had everything to do with creativity. Consumers are driven primarily by the entertainment value of the game. And when a new platform comes, the leaps in gameplay aren't as dramatic as they could be because it takes a while for the developers to make full use of the new technology. If you go back and look at some of the early 16-bit games like the SNES pack-in, *Super Mario World*, it was better than *Super Mario 3* for the NES, but it wasn't that quantum leap that makes people want to go out and buy a new machine. And that problem now is going to be magnified by the fact that game machines have always been priced close to $100, and now the new machines are going to be anywhere from $250 to $400. And so **we expect people to be somewhat skeptical when it comes to the new systems** right off the bat, which is why we'll continue to support the SNES platform."

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY (Nintendo)

FLUX: How important do you think Donkey Kong Country was in keeping the SNES alive?

"We look at that game versus what we've already seen on the PlayStation and the Saturn and we believe it's not only comparable, but superior. *Donkey Kong Country* really took a lot of people by surprise because at that point, all the technical efforts of our competitors and would-be competitors were focused on the hardware, and not enough attention was being paid to the other side of the equation, which was improving the software. We brought a whole new look and feel to the genre with *Donkey Kong Country*, and that's the most important thing for consumers—not the idea of seeing *Madden 2000* look a little better on a 32-bit machine. It really places a premium on creativity."

FLUX: Most publishers are moving away from cartridges due to the high production costs—and yet Nintendo's Ultra 64 machine will be cartridge based. Are there limitations to cartridge games?

"We actually think the cartridge is a superior carrier for games. A lot of it comes down to fundamental access to the data, and a CD needs to spin in order to find the data—but a cartridge is almost instantaneous. Plus, the reason why the new 32-bit systems are going to be so expensive is because you have to add a CD-ROM drive to each machine and also add a lot of short-term memory. For example, if you set up a Sony PlayStation and run the *Ridge Racer* game, as soon as the game is downloaded into the memory, you can literally reach in and take the CD out of the machine and continue playing. That's because they've only used a fraction of the CD, and the gameplay that is there has to be loaded into the short-term memory. But with a cartridge you can have continuous access. And even though the cost of CDs is cheaper than cartridges, we're betting on the fact that the consumers will ultimately vote for the best gaming experience."

FLUX: How do you think the next generation platforms, including the Ultra, will fare in the coming year?

"I think the vast majority of the consumers are going to sit tight for the

SUPER METROID (Nintendo)

next nine months or so and stick with the machines they already own. And **we're still expecting a few million more people to go out and buy a 16-bit system before the end of the calendar year.** Only the people who always rush out and buy new technology will be the ones to invest in a new platform."

CATAPULT™

Lynn Heublein, Executive Vice President, Catapult Entertainment

FLUX: So what's the state of the 16-bit product?

"I think there's a place for a limited number of 16-bit products that will sell very well, including games and a handful of other products. And we believe that the XBAND can be one of those products because it really enhances the lifecycle of the 16-bit platform and brings a completely new element to it."

FLUX: Is the 16-bit market too competitive?

"**Even though game publishers aren't producing as many 16-bit titles as before, there's still going to be about 100 new titles in the next year or so.** And unless a company can spend a lot of money marketing their product, it's going to be very difficult for their product to stand out, especially when you consider that there are already 600 16-bit titles in the marketplace."

FLUX: Will Catapult be looking to bring the XBAND Video Game Modem to the new 32-bit systems?

"We're definitely looking at the next generation platforms. We probably won't be there at the initial launch, but we'll be there once there's enough of an installed base—the XBAND requires some critical mass of platforms to be out there. We're cautiously optimistic that the next generation platforms will be successful."

FLUX: We're heard there are technical limitations to using a product like the XBAND with a 32-bit system. True?

"The same system that we use for the 16-bit systems can definitely be applied to the next generation platforms."

FLUX: Is Catapult also looking at the PC market?

"There will be a PC version of the XBAND, possibly released this fall. We're working with Intel on the development. The difference between the PC XBAND and the 16-bit XBAND is that you won't have to pay for the service with the PC unit—you'll only have to pay for the piece of hardware. And we'll be offering different services that you can't get by dialing someone up with your own computer modem and playing. You'll be able to play people all over the country at a pretty low cost, and plus our interface will be nice and easy."

Auto-Match
Player List
Mailbox
Stats
Options
Return

XBAND (Catapult)

FLUX: Is it a risky time for 16-bit game publishers?

"I think the 16-bit market is a mature market, and some game publishers will continue to do okay. It basically depends on which companies have the marketing muscle with the retailers and who are willing to spend the money to promote their products: companies like EA, Acclaim, Nintendo and Sega."

GENESIS XBAND (Catapult)

FLUX: Is it a risky time for Catapult, seeing as you have a SNES and Genesis XBAND currently on the market?

"The next year is going to be a really weird time in the video game market, mainly because there's going to be so much going on and so many companies shouting, 'Buy me! Buy me!' that I think it's going to cause a tremendous amount of confusion in the marketplace, and no company is going to do that well."

FLUX: How confident are you that consumers will make the jump to the Saturn or PlayStation when they're released?

"We sometimes use focus groups, and quite often we'll get a kid who has a library of 50 or so 16-bit cartridges, and says that he's not just going to walk away from all that as soon as the new systems come out. And I think that attitude applies to a lot of people—there's definitely going to be a wait-and-see attitude with people and a lot of them are not going to jump to the new platforms right away. Not at least until they come down in price."

FLUX: If you were a consumer right now faced with all this 32-bit hype, what would you be thinking?

"If I were a consumer, I would be thinking that every time the game platform industry changes, there are winners and there are losers—and that I wouldn't want to invest in something where I might lose. If I were a real educated consumer I'd think about Sony and remember the Betamax, and realize that sometimes the best piece of hardware doesn't win. And **I'd probably wait on the next generation platforms and just buy a 16-bit version of Madden '96 instead.**"

FLUX: How long do you think it will be before the 16-bit market dies out?

"Even though the 16-bit market isn't what people are talking about right now, we don't believe that the next generation platforms are going to supplant the 16-bit platforms right off the bat. It's hard to argue with 30 million 16-bit households."

FLUX: So will Catapult continue to make 16-bit games XBAND compatible?

"Oh, yes, absolutely."

ELECTRONIC ARTS, INC.

Pat Becker, Director Of Corporate Communications, Electronic Arts

FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit titles will Electronic Arts be producing in 1995?

"We'll be producing approximately half the number of 16-bit titles as we did last year. We believe that the 16-bit cartridge market is very mature, and we see that software market declining between 30% and 40% in 1995. The 16-bit market has also become a highly seasonal business, with the bulk of the products being sold at Christmas. As a result, the only titles that are going to be successful are going to be the top-10 titles—and it's going to take a lot of money in terms of advertising and marketing to have those top 10 titles. It's not a market for the faint of heart, and **I think you're going to see a bunch of different companies losing a lot of money in the next year.**"

NHL '95 (EA Sports)

FLUX: Has the 16-bit market become too competitive?

"From a publishers standpoint—and this also applies to retailers—you don't want to be left holding a ton of 16-bit inventory when the music stops. And this is a real challenge for publishers and retailers—to make the correct guess on which inventory to stock up on. There are a lot of titles chasing very limited shelf space, and as retailers begin to balance their space between 16- and 32-bit and PC CD-ROMs, it means that there's only going to be a certain amount of shelf space that will be available at a Toys 'R Us or Wal-Mart or CompUSA. So the retailers will have to decide which products they're going to carry, which means that game publishers will have to make sure they can even get their product into distribution."

FLUX: Why did EA invest so heavily in producing 3DO titles?

"We did that because felt that CD-ROMs were definitely going to be the future of entertainment software. Last year we came out and started talking much more publicly about our position to move as aggressively and rapidly as possible into products based solely on CD-ROM, and **a lot of people in the industry felt that we were moving out of the 16-bit market too rapidly**, and that there was at least another good year in that market. And I would think that people have revised that opinion now. There's a clear belief that the 32-bit systems and PC CD-ROMs will be the future of the industry."

FLUX: How much of a factor is the cost of producing CD-ROMs to cartridges?

"A 16-bit cartridge costs us anywhere from $16 to $20 each, and you have to buy those in advance—which means guessing right, or being stuck with too much inventory. With a CD-ROM, we can build a product and pack it out for $3. Plus, the lead time for producing a CD is much shorter than a cartridge, so you don't have to make a guess before you see the consumer acceptance of a product. CD-ROMs give you a lot more flexibility and the cost of goods is much lower compared to cartridges."

FLUX: Will EA continue to produce its franchise titles, like Madden and NHL, for the 16-bit systems?

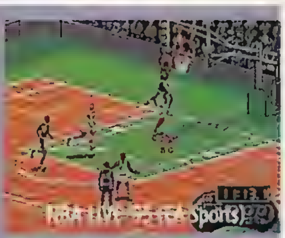
"Absolutely. We will definitely stick with the 16-bit titles that we believe will continue to be sure winners."

FLUX: How heavily will EA invest in publishing 32-bit games?

"Our strategy is to get in early on the new platforms and be able to develop new product franchises very early on in the product cycle. It's different from other vendors, but it's a strategy that served EA very well in the transition from 8-bit to 16-bit. And with the knowledge we have from working with the 3DO, we're already working on second and third generation products for the 32-bit systems. Compared to other game publishers, we plan to have the broadest array of 32-bit products."

FLUX: How confident are you that American consumers will embrace the Saturn, PlayStation and Ultra 64 when they didn't exactly respond in droves to the 3DO and Jaguar?

"First let me peel the Ultra 64 right off the equation because we really haven't seen development systems yet or gotten any licensing information for the system, so it makes it very difficult to talk about how well it will do. As far as how the PlayStation and Saturn will do, a lot of it depends on what price point these systems come in at. Now even though Japan can't be the model for the world, but the both the Saturn and the PlayStation have sold incredibly well in Japan, and if the United States can see a portion of that enthusiasm, it'll be a very good marketplace. I think you're going to see a pretty strong 4th quarter this year for the 32-bit systems."



NBA LIVE '95 (EA Sports)

FLUX: Is now a risky time for game publishers?

"I think it's more risky for the smaller game publishers. Right now a company needs significant resources to be able to weather the transition, and I think EA and a few other companies have the luxury of being able to spend marketing and advertising dollars to move their new products along. Looking at the data for last Christmas, EA, Sega, Nintendo and Acclaim together had over 65% of the total video game revenue—which means that the hundreds of other companies making 16-bit products were sharing a very small part of that pie. And a lot of those companies will not survive to make it to the next round of platforms."

FLUX: If you were a consumer right now facing all this 32-bit hype, what would you be thinking?

"First of all, I don't think many people are going to be investing in new hardware until they see what's going to happen with the new platforms. To some degree, I think it's going to be a price point game—people will evaluate the systems, then make a purchase depending on the price."

ACCOLADE™

Rob Harris, Vice President Of Product Development, Accolade

FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit titles will Accolade be producing in 1995?

"We're tapering way back on the 16-bit titles, and I think this will reflect what's happening throughout the industry. Recently, the 16-bit market has been very hit-driven, where the only games that were really profitable were the ones that could make the top 10 list. And plus, the installed base of 16-bit machines and the number of game machines being used is tapering off quickly. **The assumption is that once people start buying the new game machines, they'll stop using their old machines.** It's just not cool to play with old machines when new ones become available."

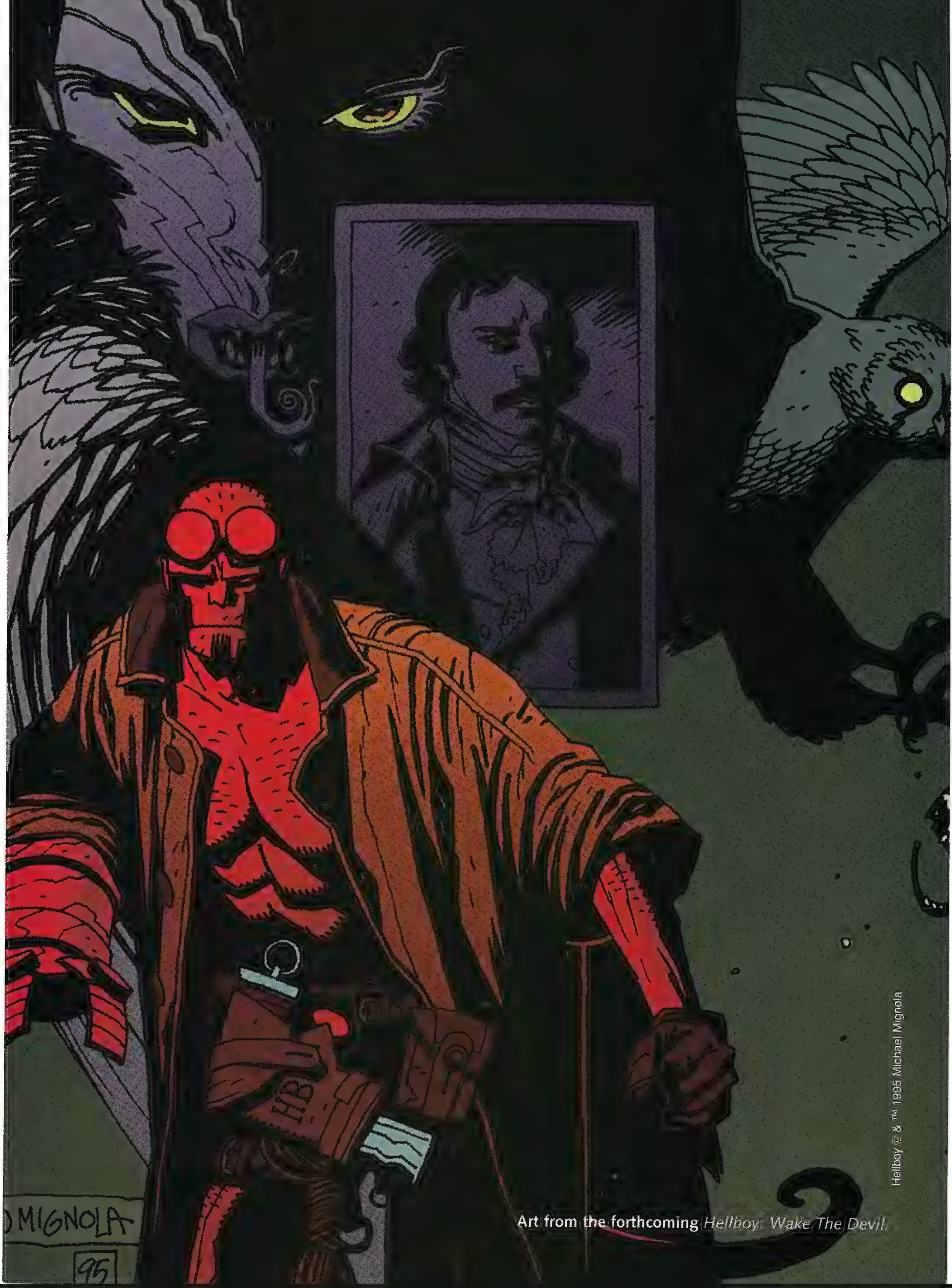
FLUX: How much is cost a factor in publishers switching over to the CD-ROM format?

"When you look at 16-bit compared to 32-bit games, the reason for switching isn't so much the data bus—meaning the 16 or 32—but the factor of cartridge versus CD-ROM. It's a difference between $12 to $16 dollars for a cart and less than $3 for a CD including the packaging. So **there's an enormous desire to switch over to CDs**, and it's making the cartridge games look really risky right now.

"Plus, producing cartridge games forces a company to guess how many are going to sell, and produce that many. Publishers have ended up with an excess of unsold product all throughout gaming history, as recently as Acclaim with *NBA Jam TE* and as far back as

BRETT HULL '95 (Accolade)

continued on Pg 80


MIGNOLA
95
HB

Art from the forthcoming *Hellboy: Wake The Devil.*

Hellboy © & ™ 1995 Michael Mignola

HIGHWAY TO HELL

Mike Mignola used to be known around the Marvel offices as a pain in the ass—but today he's got one of Dark Horse's best-selling horror comics. Hellboy creator Mignola talks to FLUX about his struggle to the top.

by Chris Golden

For *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola, the road to a thriving career as a comic book artist has been anything but smooth. Long before the success of last year's *Hellboy* miniseries, Mignola cut his teeth on such titles as *Batman: Gotham By Gaslight*, *Dracula* (Topps), *Doctor Doom/Doctor Strange*, and *Phantom Stranger*. But it all started with Marvel's *The Defenders*, a comic for which he inked a measly five pages.

"Fortunately, I'm not credited on the book because I did such a hack job," Mignola admits. "I was still living in California at the time and I knew I had done a bad job but I was already planning to go to New York [*Marvel's headquarters*]. I had my plane ticket. The day before I was to leave I called the editor to ask him what he thought, and basically, in a nice way, he asked if it was too late to get the money back for my ticket. So I went to New York and no one liked what I had done. I sat in the Marvel lobby for like two months hoping some other inking work would come along."

And it did. As luck would have it, Mignola happened to be in the office one day when comics legend Dennis O'Neil came in looking for someone to ink *Master Of Kung Fu*.

"When you're a bad inker, the best thing to do is hang around the office and be there when they're on deadline," says Mignola. "That was the story of my inking career, being in the neighborhood and picking up work I could turn around fast."

Partly due to encouragement from Al Milgrom, the editor who had given him that first *Defenders* inking job ("He thought I certainly couldn't be a worse penciler than I was an inker."), Mignola became a penciler. He went through a number of projects before landing the one he considers his breakthrough.

"I did a giant superhero thing for DC called *Cosmic Odyssey*," says Mignola. "Though I'm not happy with the results when I look back on it, it was when I started developing artistically. It was certainly the most commercial thing I had ever done."

His personal best, however, was a more recent undertaking.

"I did *Legends Of The Dark Knight* #54 a couple years ago, and I still hold that up and say it's the job I have to outdo," he says. "It's the best thing I've done, and it scratched Batman off the list of characters I ever have to draw again because I can't imagine drawing him better."

Hellboy, Mignola's most recent creation on Dark Horse's Legend imprint, quickly turned into the sleeper hit of 1994. "Everybody was surprised by its success, including retailers," he admits. "Fans still have a love/hate relationship with my work. Some people really like it. Some people loathe it. I got a lot of mail saying, 'I've always hated your stuff, but I really like *Hellboy*.' It was like I'd developed enough stylistically that I now had to create a character that worked with the style I was using. I think *Batman* is something I'm well suited to draw. I think Superman is a character I have no business drawing."

With *Hellboy*, Mignola's intention from day one was to tell darkly horrific stories.

"I set out to do something between Vertigo and what Marvel passes off as a horror book—which is a superhero book that suddenly has some kind of demon in it. But I also wanted to deal with some of the subject matter that Neil Gaiman is dealing with, all the mythology and folklore."

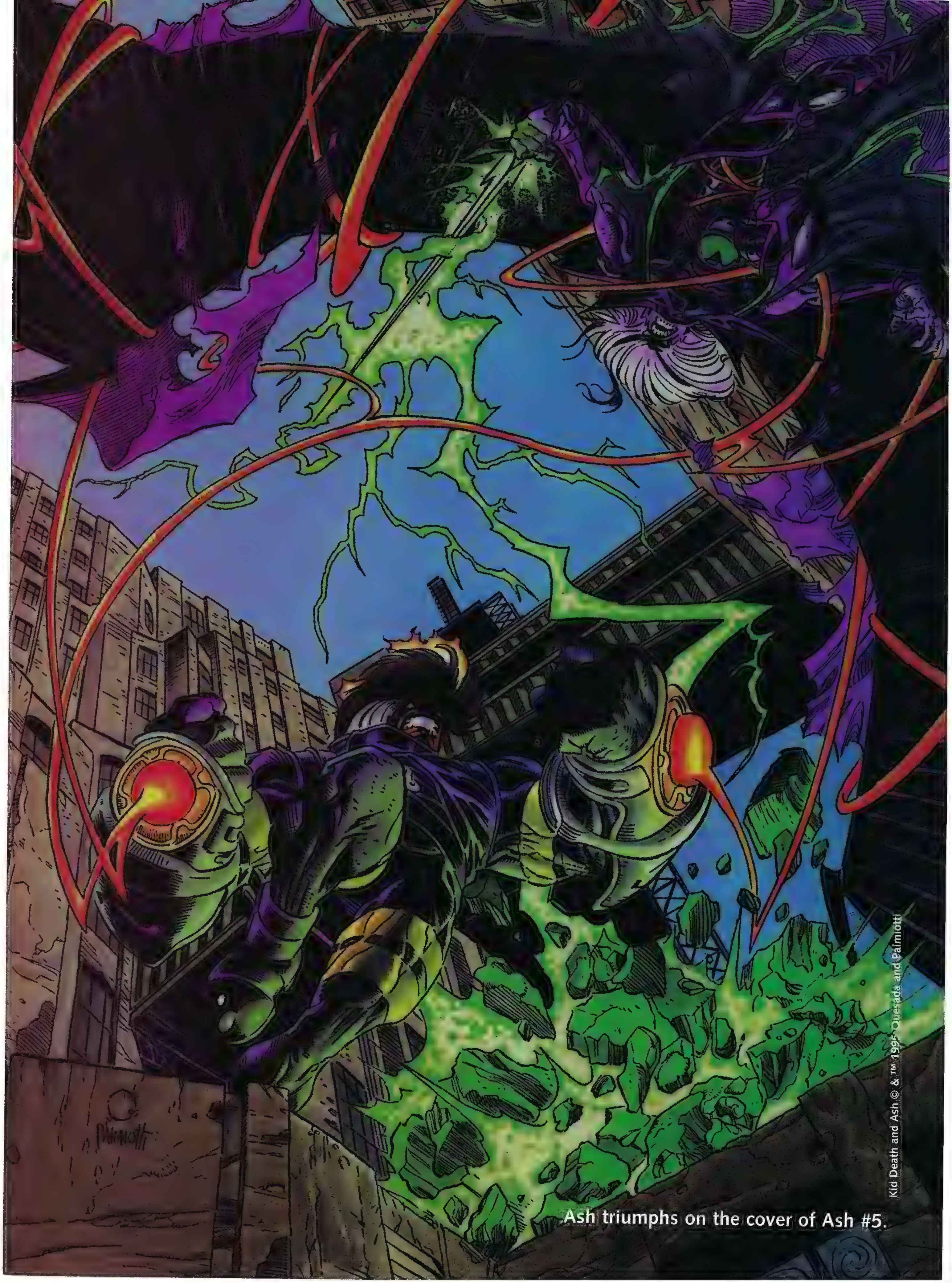
Though Mignola did a werewolf story, *Hellboy: The Wolves Of St. August* in *Dark Horse Presents*, he has "no real affection for werewolf stuff at all."

"The difference between *Hellboy* and a lot of supernatural stuff that's out there is that I'm trying not to do the conventional Hollywood things," says Mignola. "I'm looking for the weirdest possible things, the things that barely make it a werewolf story. I don't want to follow the traditional 'werewolf rules.'"

The next *Hellboy* miniseries, which is not scheduled to appear until early 1996, is called *Wake The Devil*. According to Mignola, "It's about everything. I showed you all the bad guys for three or four panels in the first miniseries, now I'm trotting them out. I'm going to bring back the main villain, tell you who he is, and bring out those frozen Nazis I had on the last page of the first miniseries, as well as a new vampire character that we haven't seen before."

Mignola is well aware that the idea of a hell-spawned demon superhero might offend some people. But it's a problem he's not exactly sweating over.

"People have skewed ideas about things," Mignola reasons. "Everybody's offended by something. If I melted it down so that it didn't offend anybody, there'd be nothing left. In fact, the name *Hellboy* had a lot of people nervous. I haven't gotten any mail from anybody that was offended by it, but I actually got a letter from a minister who really liked it. His only question was whether I was going to deal with some kind of redemption theme. My response to that is, why would I have to redeem him? Maybe his parents are bad, but *he* hasn't done anything bad. Maybe he has to grapple with where he comes from, but he's basically a good guy. He just looks like a monster. I didn't want to do one of these angst-ridden guys who just sits around and moans, 'Oh no, I come from Hell....'"



Ash triumphs on the cover of Ash #5.

Kid Death and Ash © & ™ 1995 Quesada and Palmiotti

HOTSHOTS

With Ash currently burning up the comics scene, creators Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti feel the heat of reaching the big time.

by Chris Golden

Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti are the quintessential local boys made good. Quesada is best known as the penciler of such high profile projects as *The Ray*, *Sword of Azrael* and *Ninjak*. Palmiotti has achieved the uncommon feat of establishing a reputation, a career and a "hot" classification based almost entirely on inking. And boy does he ink, everything he can get his hands on for an endless stream of publishers. And yet, not so much anymore. Quesada has also cut back, penciling only one title: *Ash*.

The artists took their 'hot' status and started not only their own comic book, but their own publishing company, Event Comics. Coming up on its fourth issue, *Ash* is kicking...well, y'know. And now comics' dynamic duo have teamed up with one of their heroes for the cover of FLUX direct market edition #2, Mike Mignola.

"I think it would be like that with any entertainment business," says Quesada. "If you were an actor and were given the chance to work with an established star, it would be the exact same thing. Mike's a certifiable genius. I've seen the stamp on his ass to prove it."

Consistently thought of as a team, the truth is that Quesada and Palmiotti haven't been working on comics together for any length of time. Then again, they've known each other since before either was a star.

"We met on line getting hamburgers at a San Diego Con," Quesada recalls.

"We were basically in the same boat," adds Palmiotti. "'Hello, here we are, does anybody care?' We had a table in the back of the con, and the only thing that came by us was loose change when somebody dropped a coin. We'd step on it and go, 'Look, we made thirty-five cents in San Diego!'"

For Palmiotti, his big break was inking seven issues of *The Punisher*, from 52 to 57.

"Those issues were the top sales for *The Punisher*, even better than the first seven," says Palmiotti. "I started getting work at other companies after that."

For Quesada, of course, the breakthrough came with *The Ray*, a miniseries DC barely marketed. Despite the current status of the character, it's easy to forget that the success of the miniseries was totally unexpected.

So what was the first big thing they did together?

"These two blondes in San Francisco, the Barbi Twins," Palmiotti deadpans. "Actually it was *X-O Manowar* #0. It was the first time we did a whole story together."

Around the time Quesada was negotiating with Valiant to work on their new title, *Ninjak*, his agent, Lori Braddock, began to discuss with them the idea of starting their own company. She is now the publisher at Event Comics.

"We're a major grassroots operation," says Quesada. "Three people."

Ash, for the uninitiated, is a New York City firefighter who doubles as a superhero—which makes him, according to Quesada, "a hero all the time. We're talking about a guy who is on call all the time, a guy who rushes into blazing buildings. Now all of a sudden he finds himself in this superhero persona.

"We don't intend to make the firefighters hapless supporting characters who come into a blazing building and go, 'Quick, call Ash to save everybody.' Firefighters are the only heroes left. Aside from taking shit from local nightclubs for breaking fire codes, what is there to be corrupt about in the fire department? It's a very militaristic way of living—like being in the army. There ain't no fucking around. You watch your buddy's back, or you're dead."

The other thing Quesada promises we'll never see is Ash, whose real name is Ashley, calling himself "FireGuy or something." In an effort to stay realistic, very few of the characters will have superhero names.

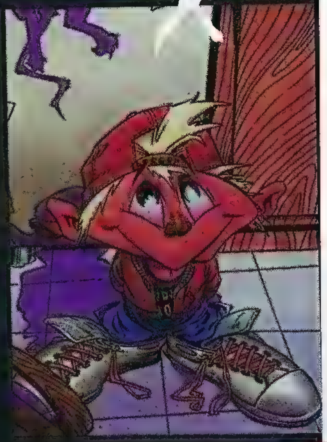
"We have friends that are firefighters," says Palmiotti on the subject of reality. "We've gone to firehouses, Joe's talked to doctors about what the treatment would be for certain burns. If it's going to be in there, it's going to be based in reality."

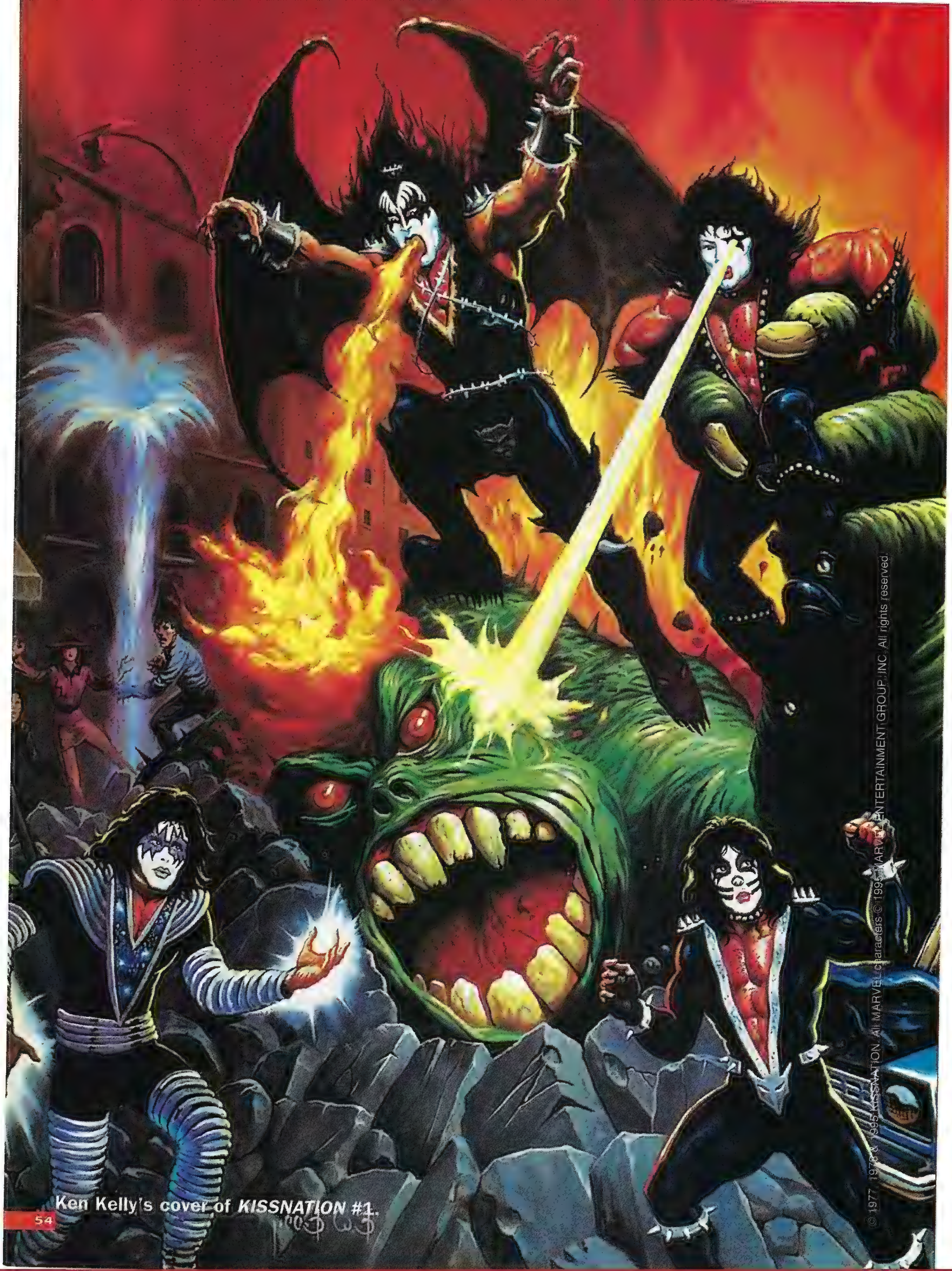
"The book is hard-core New York," adds Quesada. "Ash is a young, single guy who lives in the city. An interesting point for fans: the cats in the book, they're my cats. The apartment in the book is my apartment. The bar in the book is an actual bar, where 90% of *Ash* was created. The bartenders are all real guys. If you ever find this tavern you would meet these guys."

Also currently available from Event Comics is a lewd, crude one-shot called *Kid Death & Fluffy*.

"It's about everything right-wing Christian fundamentalists hate," laughs Quesada. Penciled by [*Beavis And Butt-head Marvel comic artist*] Rick Parker and inked by Palmiotti, the black and white *Kid Death & Fluffy* is sure to rattle a few cages around the comics industry.

"It's rude," adds Palmiotti. "Definitely for mature audiences. Fluffy, who has the brain of a cocker spaniel, is this cybernetic T-Rex who pretty much just rolls around and eats people. He kills lots of people, rips apart airports, shoots people in swimming pools and insults everyone. Including us."





Ken Kelly's cover of *KISSNATION* #1.

© 1977, 1978 & 1995 KISSNATION. All MARVEL characters © 1995 MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. All rights reserved.

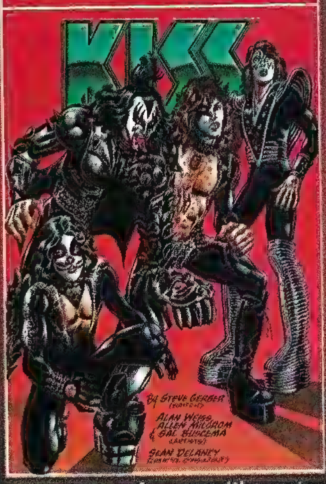
HOTTER THAN HELL

AFTER 20 YEARS AS ROCK'S SHREWDEST BUSINESSMEN, KISS CONTINUE TO SET THE MERCHANDISING WORLD ON FIRE WITH A NEW COLLECTION OF COMICS, A CAREER-SPANNING ANTHOLOGY, A TRAVELING CONVENTION AND A FORTHCOMING BOXED SET.

BY JEFF GILBERT

Interviewing Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons—co-founders and only remaining original members of Seventies rock legends KISS—is no easy task. Even just talking to them is a total mind-blower. I mean, I've seen a million KISS concerts, bought a million KISS albums, and bounced around my bedroom wearing nothing but KISS makeup (mom's lipstick) and my sister's black leotards while listening to "Strutter" a million times. So having to come up with halfway intelligent questions about new KISS projects was truly difficult, seeing as all I really wanted to do was ask Gene how many times his hair caught on fire while blowing flames or if the chick Paul groped on the back cover of ***Hotter Than Hell*** was wearing underwear and if so, why? Thankfully, Paul and Gene quickly sensed my drooling fanboy tendencies and patiently answered all of my fumbling attempts at professional journalism. This may be hard to understand for those of you who think the sun shines out of Green Day's pimply rear ends, but there wouldn't be bands like that were it not for KISS.

But don't take my word for it, see for yourself why KISS was—and still is—the hottest band in the land for millions by gazing upon the Holy Grail of rock books—***KISSTORY***, a 440-page, photo-choked, fan-stoked, career-spanning tome of epic proportions. Painstakingly written by FLUX executive editor Jeff Kitts, ***KISSTORY*** is the definitive KISS statement. Only the Encyclopedia Britannica holds more information. Unable to form connected sentences, Gene politely interrupts my stuttering and describes the book with equal excitement. "It's 11 1/2 by 14 inches," enthuses the God of Thunder. "There's page after page of fan artwork, paintings and a whole section on KISS fanzines. Plus photos of people with KISS tattoos and pages dedicated to the KISS tribute bands. We even have high school pictures of Lenny Kravitz in Gene Simmons makeup."



And it doesn't stop with ***KISSTORY***. Twenty years after releasing the biggest selling comic book of all time (until Spider-Man came along), KISS have reissued their two original Marvel comic books from the Seventies in the form of ***KISS Classics***. Marvel also plans to release ***KISSNATION***, a new collection of KISS comics which picks up where ***Classics*** left off.

And let's not forget the upcoming 30-city touring KISS conventions in which KISS themselves bring out all their memorabilia and play requests—unplugged! There's also a boxed set of rare and unreleased KISS material in the making, a long-form video, a new studio album and subsequent world tour. KISS even have their own Internet address (KISSNATION@aol.com).

If after reading ***KISSTORY*** cover to cover and absorbing all the slick, recolored art in ***KISS Classics*** you still have to ask what it was like going to a KISS concert and having your face blasted with confetti while half-dressed girls and fireworks exploded around you like World War III, then maybe you should stick to Green Day. Me, I still love it loud. Even though I still drool when I say it.

FLUX: Gene, tell us about *KISSNATION*, KISS' new Marvel comic book series.

GENE SIMMONS: When we started to review the KISS fanzines we always get, we said, "This is beyond *Star Trek*, beyond anybody who believes they have fans." This is where the idea for *KISSNATION* came up. We've been working on *KISSNATION* for about six months and when it does see the light of day, people will be shocked. Paul and I came up with the plot, and Stan Lee, the man who created The Hulk and Spider-Man, is actually writing it—he's coming out of retirement. The first issue teams up present day KISS and the alternative universe KISS in makeup and teams the X-Men with Professor X and Dr. Strange. And there's a big surprise at the end. And that doesn't include the other 150 pages of articles, photos, all of which was written by the fans. It's a monster.

FLUX: Isn't there also a 30-page comic that comes with *KISSTORY?*

SIMMONS: That's a separate thing we decided to do with the book and was done by two guys who used to do those Revolutionary bootleg KISS comics.

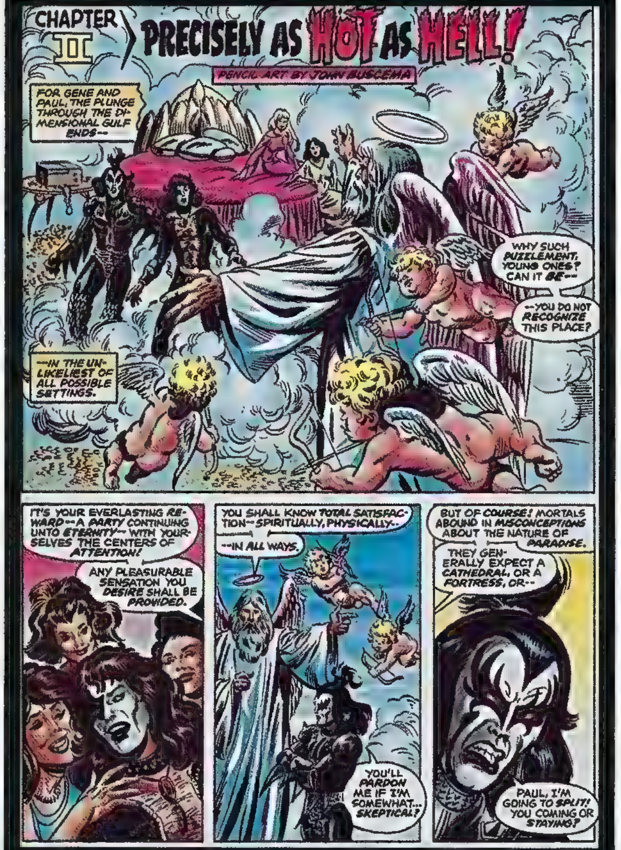
FLUX: What are your thoughts on unauthorized KISS comics?

SIMMONS: We appreciate the attention, but the lawyers keep screaming at us saying, "You can't let this thing exist!" The fans who do the comics are well-meaning people, but the guy who's got the wallet and paying for it and making money doesn't negate the fact that the people who are actually drawing it love doing it. We now have all the original black-and-white art from those books and at some point we'll recolor them and put them all together in one big book. We put the two guys who did those comics to work because they know their stuff. This gives them a little helping hand and if it gets a career going for them, great.

FLUX: I understand Ken Kelly, the guy who painted the covers for *Destroyer* and *Love Gun*, is doing the cover for *KISSNATION*.

SIMMONS: Ken has done a wrap-around painting for the first issue. On the cover we're fighting this monster that's popping out of the earth, which is really a recreation of *Fantastic Four* #1. The monster's tail pops up out of the ground on the back cover and Wolverine and Dr. Strange are fighting the rest.

FLUX: Speaking of Wolverine, the early Gene Simmons costumes looked like a precursor to the Wolverine character.


CHAPTER II
PRECISELY AS HOT AS HELL!
PENCIL ART BY JOHN BUSCEMA
FOR GENE AND PAUL, THE PLUNGE THROUGH THE DIMENSIONAL GULF ENDS--
--IN THE UNLIKELIEST OF ALL POSSIBLE SETTINGS.
WHY SUCH PUZZLEMENT, YOUNG ONES? CAN IT BE--
--YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE?
IT'S YOUR EVERLASTING REWARD--A PARTY CONTINUING UNTO ETERNITY-- WITH YOURSELVES THE CENTERS OF ATTENTION!
ANY PLEASURABLE SENSATION YOU DESIRE SHALL BE PROVIDED.
YOU SHALL KNOW TOTAL SATISFACTION-- SPIRITUALLY, PHYSICALLY..
--IN ALL WAYS.
YOU'LL PARDON ME IF I'M SOMEWHAT... SKEPTICAL?
BUT OF COURSE! MORTALS ABOUND IN MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF PARADISE.
THEY GENERALLY EXPECT A CATHEDRAL, OR A FORTRESS, OR--
PAUL, I'M GOING TO SPLIT! YOU COMING OR STAYING?

A page from Marvel Comics' *KISS Classics* trade paperback.

SIMMONS: It's interesting you say that because that's right on the button. In the editorial to *KISS Classics*, the editor, Mort Todd, did a long piece on how the original Simmons character predated Wolverine. The two were very much connected.

FLUX: Tell us about KISS' first comic book appearance in Marvel's *Howard The Duck* in 1976.

SIMMONS: Steve Gerber, the guy who created *Howard The Duck*, had a problem with Marvel and left. He created *Howard The Duck* but somehow Marvel thought they owned that character. We had the same problem. They came to us and said, "We own the character Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, etc." No, you don't own it. You're allowed to put the magazines out, but that's it. So we left without releasing the third book in the series. Now there's a new regime at Marvel and we're doing fine. We're very happy.

FLUX: According to statistics, Marvel's original KISS comic held the #1 sales record for thirteen years and was eventually overcome by Spider-Man.

SIMMONS: Yes, and what they also don't mention is that the book cost three to four times as much because comics were 35 cents back then—and our comic was $1.50. They thought we were out of our minds. But when it sold a million copies, Marvel freaked. They didn't understand, they didn't get it.

FLUX: Are there any comics that interest you now? There's so much incredible new stuff out there.

SIMMONS: Yes, there is so much, but very few books remain quality. Some of the earlier *WildC.A.T.S* books were okay. Every once in a while there's a good *Silver Surfer* story. The problem is that too many characters look like *Pitt* or *Booth* or even *Lobo*. You should see the new issue of *Lobo*. It looks just like me on the cover! I'd rather have too many comic books than too little because there are an awful lot of people who love doing it. And that's the reason behind *KISSNATION*. I want to give artists and writers, people who don't get a chance, to get up at bat and swing that professional swing. Fans print their own fanzines at home and hardly anybody sees it. *KISSNATION* is totally written by the fans, every article, every photo taken, everything. We have phenomenal articles. One was with our old bootmaker. Then they wrote an article about the guys who built the mannequins for our conventions. And the important point here is you don't have a professional guy who's trying to impress you with how well he writes. These are human beings with passion. Sometimes I'll sit down and read a paragraph and wind up reading the whole thing. That's what makes it real.

FLUX: Let's talk about the *KISSTORY* book. The ad for the book says it's a limited edition. What kind of numbers are we talking?

PAUL STANLEY: I lost count after 15,000 as I was signing them. I signed three and a half thousand a day.

FLUX: You must have writer's cramp.

STANLEY: Life can be tougher. [*laughs*]

FLUX: It must have been fun to go back through the archives to get material for the book.

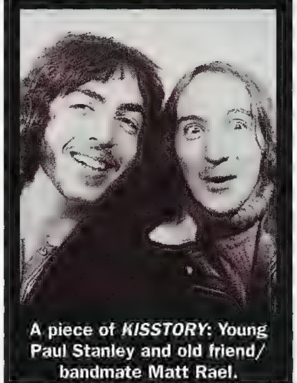
STANLEY: It was amazing because during the Seventies we took photos of ourselves on tour without makeup, backstage, at rehearsals, all kinds of stuff. It was just a matter of time before it was something the public was going to get to see. Like this picture of Peter [*Criss, original KISS drummer*] and I in Brussels before a show behind the stage outside without our shirts on, or one of Gene sitting on the grass in Salt Lake City at a party. These are family snapshots.

FLUX: Which is a great way to look at it, seeing as the KISS Army has always been close-knit, like a family.

STANLEY: It is, and you know, *KISSTORY*, in many ways, is a family scrapbook. But it's not just ours, it's the fans because the truth is that our fans identify with everything that's happened. Seeing all the pictures in *KISSTORY* is like looking at home movies. You may not be in it, but you were there.

FLUX: How deep did you go in terms of telling the story?

STANLEY: We wanted to tell the story of the band no-holds-barred, but we also didn't want to do character assassinations on anybody. There was no need to get vicious or backstab. When I saw Peter and Ace [*Frehley, original KISS guitarist*] a few months ago separately, they both commented, "Go easy on me." [*laughs*] I said to both of them, "There's nothing in this book I wouldn't say to your face." The bottom line is, without those two guys, there wouldn't have been a KISS in the beginning. No matter what happened to split us apart you can never take away from what we accomplished together. And that's family.



A piece of *KISSTORY*: Young Paul Stanley and old friend/ bandmate Matt Rael.

FLUX: Tell us about the upcoming traveling KISS convention.

STANLEY: The world-wide KISS convention, which we kicked off in Australia, is really sensational and an event like none other. We'll be taking it through America beginning in June. We have twenty costumes on life-sized mannequins, including the boots, jewelry, the belts, everything, and they're all on display in plexi-glass. There's some vintage guitars, there's Peter's complete mirrored drum kit from *Alive!* There's some of [*late drummer*] Eric Carr's drums and album cover artwork including the original *Love Gun* painting by Ken Kelly. Then there's a tribute band that does the Seventies KISS show in makeup. We also do a question-and-answer period and about ninety minutes of unplugged music. It's anywhere from nine to twelve hours. We really get a chance to speak one-on-one with the fans—and really, no question is too stupid or too embarrassing or too personal. And we pick up guitars and basically take requests. In Australia we did everything from "Room Service" and "A World Without Heroes" to "Shandi" and "Strutter." Sometimes the audiences know the words better than we do.

FLUX: Taking requests on the fly must make it a bit tough.

STANLEY: But that makes it fun because it means flying by the seat of your pants. There were some songs that we knew, but we also made it clear that this was going to be trial and error, so nobody was guaranteeing perfection. Somebody wanted to hear "Every Time I Look At You," from *Revenge*, which we've never played live. But we played it start to finish. I did a couple things from my solo album and we just had a ball.

FLUX: Will the upcoming KISS box set be the audio version of *KISSTORY*?

STANLEY: In a sense. We've been stockpiling demos and all kinds of rarities in the last few years. For example, I found the demo for "Love Gun" I did with another drummer. Then there's a demo for "Detroit, Rock City," and a song that was never released called, "It's The Fire." Gene has demos of songs with Eddie and Alex Van Halen playing on them.

FLUX: How do you maintain your level of enthusiasm for these kinds of projects after all these years?

SIMMONS: There's enough fun being in a band in the first place, and getting paid is even more amazing. The fact that there are females who want to have your children is beyond belief just because you're in a band. I'm not the best looking guy in the world, but I get far more puss than anybody you know and that's only because I'm in a band.

FLUX: Maybe it's because of the loyalty KISS inspire in their fans.

SIMMONS: Many years ago we said we wouldn't be here without you, the fans. The truth is we owe everything to our fans. We went through the whole gamut of having the bodyguards and limousines and all that, and saw that it ruins minds. It depletes you of any kind of individuality. So you learn to walk again, to go and shop for your own milk and bread. Then when you do that, you meet real people who tell you what's on their minds. That's one of the reason we want to do these conventions. KISS didn't start these conventions, fans did.

FLUX: What would you say to fans who want to know what it's all like?

SIMMONS: Beats working for a living. [*laughs*]

TO ORDER *KISSTORY*
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KiSSED aGaIN

aFTER 18 YEaRS aPaRT, COMICS MOGUL STaN LEE aND ROCK LEGENDS KISS REUNITE FOR KISSNaTION, MaRVEL'S aLL-NEW KISS COMIC BOOK

"Ever since I first saw KISS back in the Seventies, I liked them," says Stan Lee. "They looked just like superheroes and were bombastic, amazing, and most of all, impressive."

With such generous words of praise, it comes as no surprise that Stan Lee—founder of Marvel Comics and co-creator of The Fantastic Four and Spider-Man among other Marvel Universe characters—is contributing his renowned writing skills to ***KISSNATION***, Marvel's forthcoming comic/magazine featuring KISS.

Lee's relationship with KISS dates back to 1977 when Marvel took the risk of publishing the magazine-sized ***Marvel Super Special*** #1 featuring KISS as four superheroes battling the evil Doctor Doom [***recently re-released by Marvel as a trade paperback called*** KISS Classics]. But the risk paid off, and ***MSS*** #1 sold over a million copes and became the company's most successful book for the next 13 years.

"Marvel always wanted to be part of the music scene," says Lee. "And we wanted a group that would make the venture worth while."

Now, 18 years later, KISS make their return to the comics scene with ***KISSNATION***. According to Lee, he's writing two parts of a three-part story in which the original superpowered KISS meet their contemporaries (Paul, Gene, Bruce Kulick and Eric Singer).

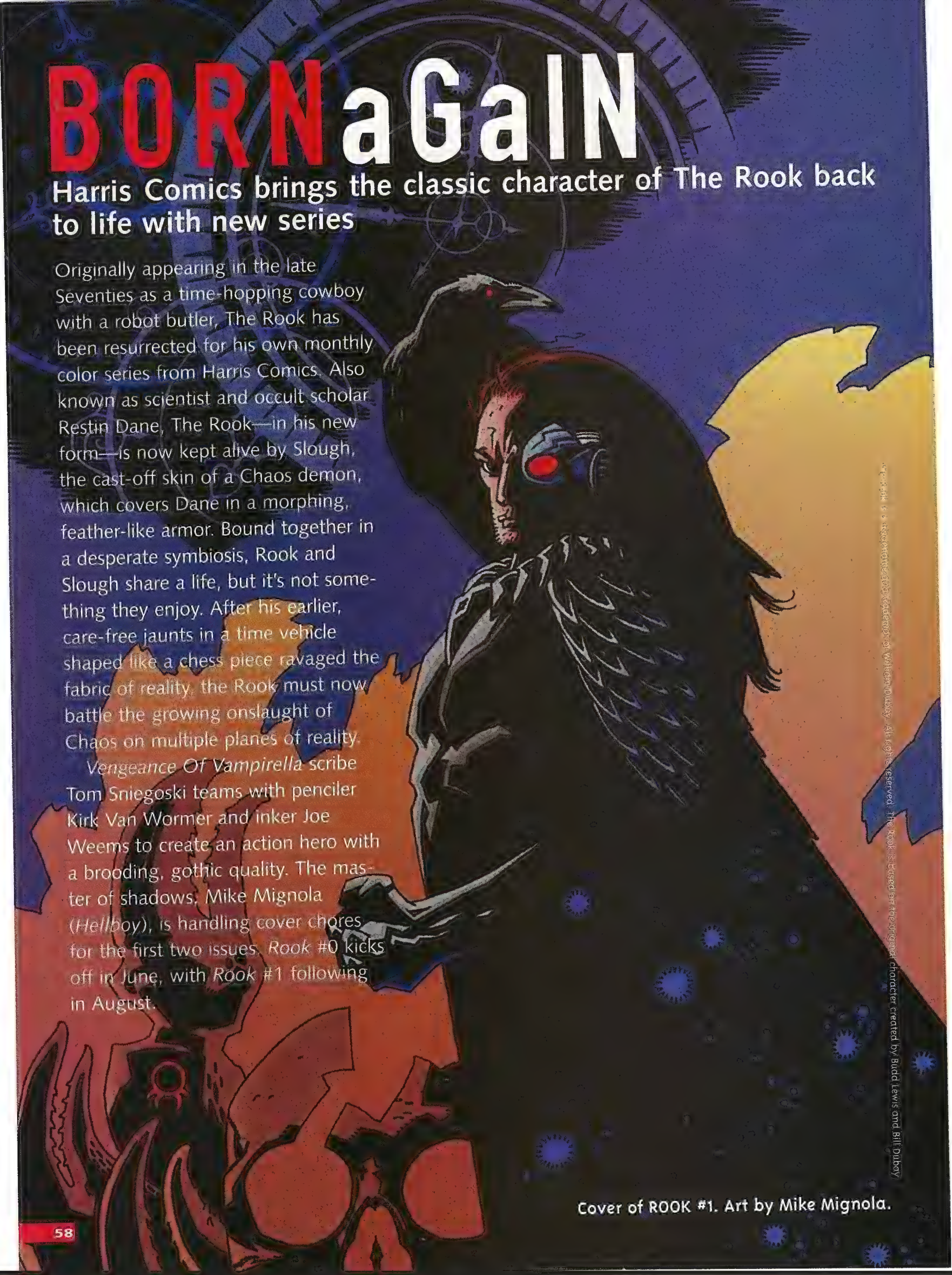
"Gene and [***Marvel editor***] Mort Todd called me with a basic outline, and I agreed to dialogue the story once the plot was finalized," says Lee. "It's going to make for one hell of a fantastic story."—**ROBERT V. CONTE**

BORN aGaIN

Harris Comics brings the classic character of The Rook back to life with new series

Originally appearing in the late Seventies as a time-hopping cowboy with a robot butler, The Rook has been resurrected for his own monthly color series from Harris Comics. Also known as scientist and occult scholar Restin Dane, The Rook—in his new form—is now kept alive by Slough, the cast-off skin of a Chaos demon, which covers Dane in a morphing, feather-like armor. Bound together in a desperate symbiosis, Rook and Slough share a life, but it's not something they enjoy. After his earlier, care-free jaunts in a time vehicle shaped like a chess piece ravaged the fabric of reality, the Rook must now battle the growing onslaught of Chaos on multiple planes of reality.

Vengeance Of Vampirella scribe Tom Sniegoski teams with penciler Kirk Van Wormer and inker Joe Weems to create an action hero with a brooding, gothic quality. The master of shadows, Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*), is handling cover chores for the first two issues. *Rook* #0 kicks off in June, with *Rook* #1 following in August.



Cover of ROOK #1. Art by Mike Mignola.

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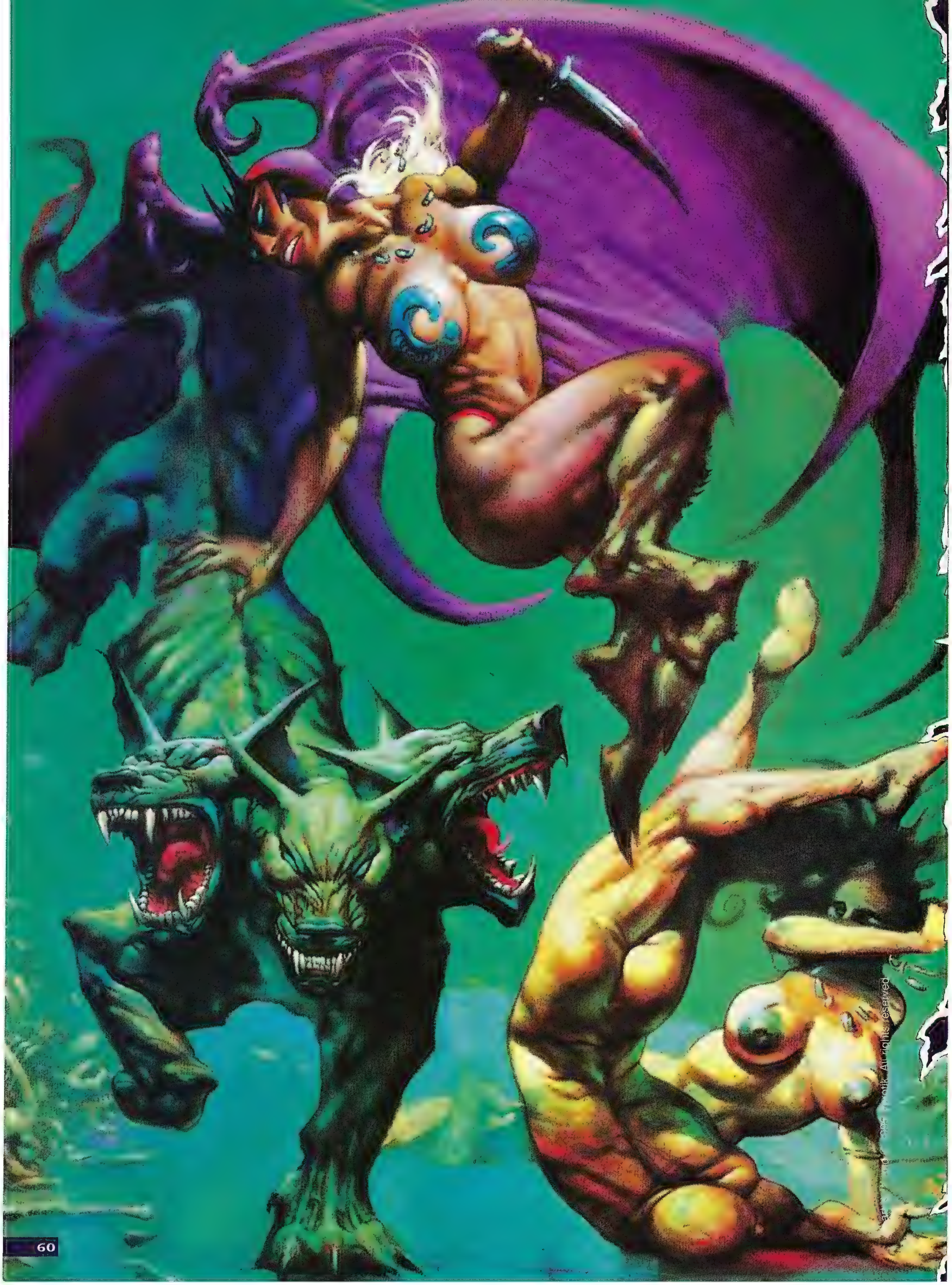

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PREMIER COMIC ARTIST SIMON BISLEY TEAMS UP WITH PUBLISHER GLENN DANZIG AND BRINGS LIFE TO DEATH DEALER.

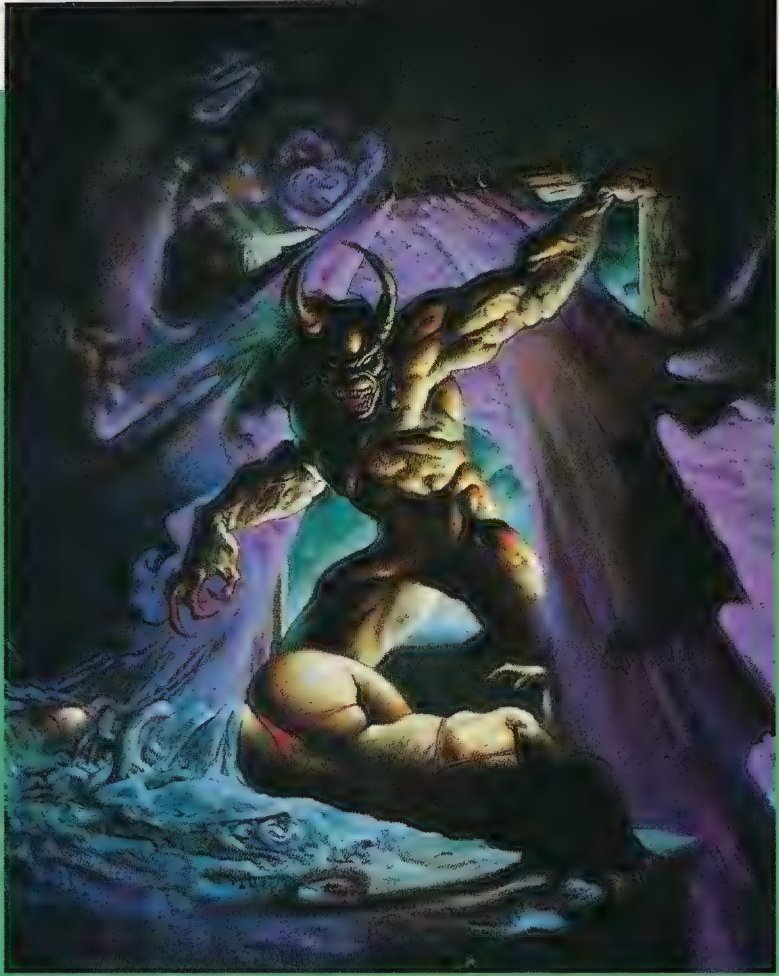
BY PHILIP NUTMAN

A menacing warrior with massive muscles perched on an even bigger black horse. Clutching a vicious ax, evil eyes glowing from the darkness beneath his helmet.

You know this picture. You must have seen it on a record cover hiding in that pile of heavy metal albums in your older brother's room. Or maybe you saw it on the cover of a paperback book in a box in the garage your dad keeps promising to throw out but never does. And it reminds you of that British artist...you know...that *Lobo* guy. What's his name? Simon Bisley—yeah, that's it.

But that dark, ominous image of the bloodthirsty barbarian isn't from some dusty old album cover or horror novel—it's the cover of *Death Dealer* #1, a new comic book from Verotik, singer Glenn Danzig's publishing company. Originally created more than a decade ago by legendary artist Frank Frazetta, the Death Dealer character will now appear as a bi-annual comic from Verotik. And the artist who's going to lay out the Dealer's cards? The man himself—Simon Bisley.

"It's a lot of fun, trying to see how many people I can kill in a comic book," jokes Bisley, on the phone from his English home. "Working with Glenn's pretty loose. He and I talk about the book, concentrating on the visuals. We never start at the beginning; we usually start with the splash pages and work around them. The story basically explores how this guy becomes a death dealer. It's a process where we're discovering the story as we go along."



Be it Lobo, Judge Dredd or Slaine—the futuristic barbarian warrior Bisley brought to life for Britain's Fleetway Publications—just a glance at Bisley's work confirms why muscular musician Danzig chose him as the artist for *Death Dealer*. Put Bisley, Danzig and Frazetta together and you're likely to find more muscle than a Mr. Universe body building competition.

"There's no script, but Glenn wants me to develop the visual flow leading to certain important story lines," explains Bisley. "So basically I draw a lot of people dying and Death Dealer going nuts and then we figure it out from there. We're working on instinct and making sure we enjoy ourselves as we work."

But while Bisley and Danzig are, in fact, having a blast exploring the Frazetta universe, Bisley admits he'd like to be collaborating directly with the great fantasy illustrator.

"Frank and I have only spoken about three times. And all he's really told me to do was make the muscles smaller and make the tone darker—always darker. That's about it. Frank hasn't had any major input at this point, so let's hope he's happy when it's done. I'm really looking forward to his reaction."

Although Bisley is renowned for his covers and painted artwork, he's only doing black and white pencils for the *Death Dealer* project, which is computer colored here in the States.

"I don't think I'll be doing too many fully-painted interiors again," says Bisley. "I think many of us painters are doing too much arty crap; we should be doing great black and white work and save the painting for the covers."

A much quicker process of working, no doubt—and yet *Death Dealer* #1 had been delayed for quite some time prior to its recent release. So what gives, Simon?

DEATH BECOMES HIM

"You can pretty much guarantee anything I'm working on will be late because I'm always juggling a lot of different projects at the same time," says Bisley. "When I was working on *Judgement On Gotham*, I was finishing *Slaine*, drawing *Lobo*, doing covers for *Doom Patrol* and some other things I committed to which were delayed by other people, and that load nearly killed me. I had to take some time off. Now I'm back in the deep end. But it seems that delays are part of the publishing business in general, so I'm not going to admit to it being all my fault."

And handling several assignments at once isn't always easy. "While I'm working on one thing, I'm inevitably thinking about something else. It takes up every waking moment of the day, and sometimes I find it difficult to get to sleep at night because there are so many images in my head. But I'm not complaining. I honestly enjoy doing a lot at once. I don't have time to get bored."

And he probably never will, as publisher Danzig gives Bisley the freedom to create whatever he wants. Aside from future *Death Dealer* stories, Bisley's doing covers for much of the Verotik line—*Satanika*, *Devilman*, *Verotika*, you name it—and then there's the offer to do his own title, "a Bisley book," according to Simon, where he can "come up with my own characters and turn 'em loose."

Doing what you want to do most and getting paid for it is, of course, every artist's dream, but collaborating with Danzig has exceeded Bisley's expectations. "Talking with Glenn's a help," says Bisley. "He's got a really good eye and he's aware of a lot of things in my work I've never thought about."

So how does Bisley create those impressive paintings? The technique he employs is a traditional one, but he lays down a background on the canvas with the use of car spray paint instead of using a brush, "because it's quicker and more even." Starting with a burnt umber or darker tone, he then adds layer and layer of lighter colors to highlight the details. "Then I add another color to accentuate a highlight.

"I guess I picked all this up from Frazetta's work anyway," he adds. "If you look at the way he paints a helmet, it doesn't just look like steel. It's got browns in it, reds, yellows—you feel like you could hold it. Since I started working on *Death Dealer*, I've become more aware of Frank's technique and he's really starting to be a definite influence."

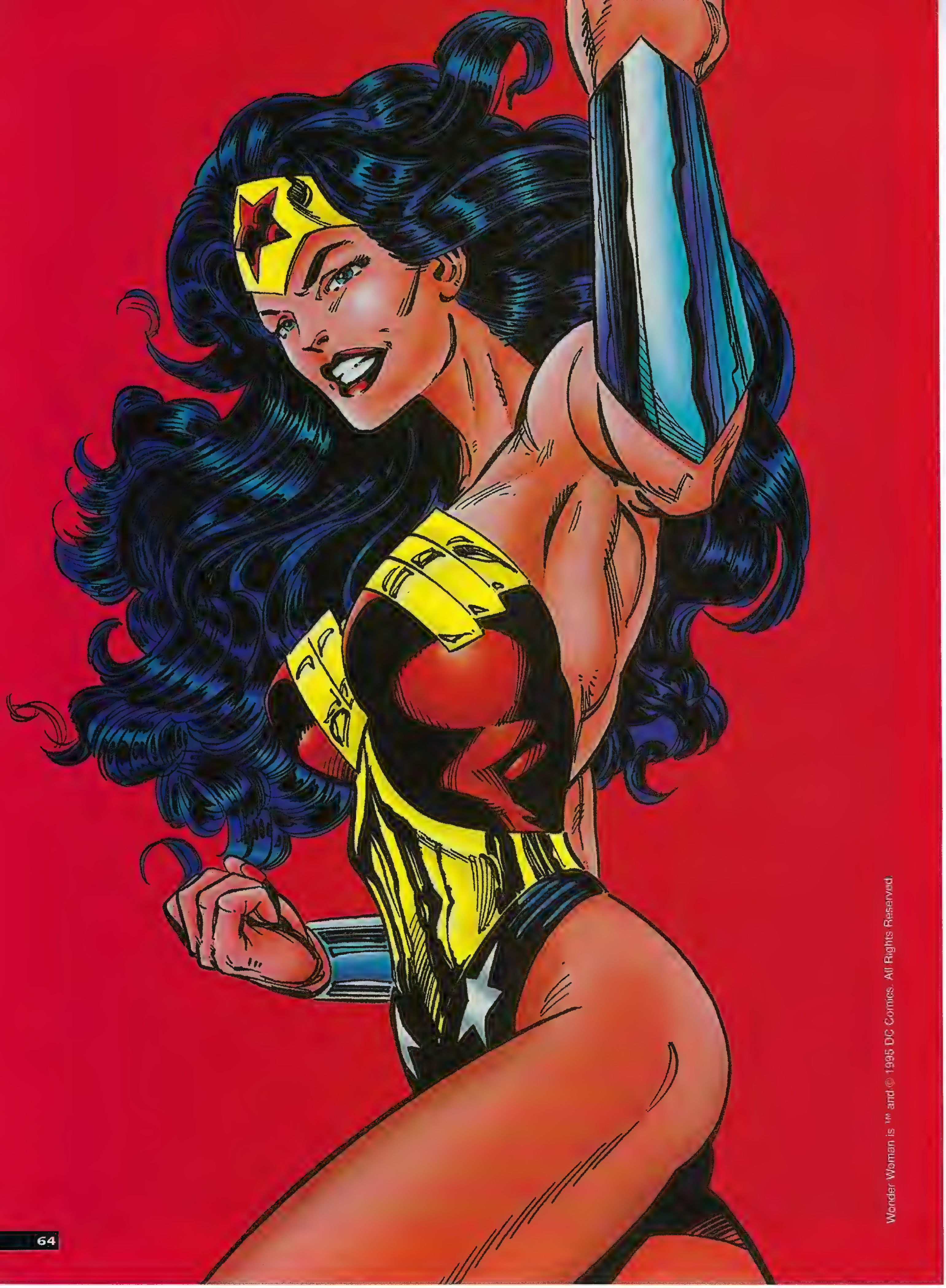
When asked him what drives him, he continues: "I guess I'm trying to create an emotion. And I'm striving to perfect an incredible physique, to paint pictures where the figures look like they move and breathe—like they're alive. I want to get it right.

"Salvador Dali's work is a real inspiration," adds Bisley, referring to the great Spanish surrealist. "His work's alive, the skin looks like you could touch it, and you can feel the bones beneath the skin. That's the effect I want to achieve."

When Bisley says he's going to move away from overly muscular characters and start putting more backgrounds into his work, it raises the question—is this the beginning of a new, kinder, more subtle Simon Bisley?

"Oh, fuck subtlety," he roars. "I hate all that pompous arty-farty shit. I've always been a bit rebellious, and I'm going to do what I want to do. I never want my work to look like anyone else's, and it's time to start stretching myself. I feel all the work I've done over the last few years has just been a warm-up.

"I haven't even started doing what I'm truly capable of."



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BYRNING UP

Red hot babe artist & writer John Byrne abandons his Men and puts a sizzling touch on DC's classic heroine Wonder Woman.

By Robert J. Sodaro

"As far as power levels go, there's Superman, Wonder Woman, and then everybody else in the DC universe descends from there," says John Byrne. It is from this starting point that Byrne takes over the writing and artistic duties on one of DC's longest running—and yet most misunderstood—characters, Wonder Woman.

When asked why he was taking over the Amazonian princess from William Messner-Lobes and Mike Deodato and seemingly abandoning his own pet projects (*Next Men*, *Babe*, *Danger Unlimited*) for Legend (the high-profile creator-owned line he and Frank Miller oversee which is distributed through Dark Horse), he responded "Paul Kupperberg, the editor of *Wonder Woman*, called me up one day and asked me if I'd like to do it, and I said sure. She's the last of the big toys that I haven't played with."

According to Byrne, *The Next Men* was on hiatus due to the current volatile nature of the marketplace. "*The Next Men* was selling just fine," says Byrne. "The big problem was that since everything out there was taking such a massive hit, I really didn't feel like sacrificing my children. So I figured that I'd pull them back and let the marketplace stabilize." Byrne figures he'll give the market six months to a year to shake itself loose before he returns to *The Next Men*.

As things stand now, if sales of *Wonder Woman* remain the same, the book will sell about as many copies as *The Next Men*. However, if—as Byrne hopes—many of the people who currently buy *The Next Men* aren't reading *Wonder Woman* and follow him over to that title, the sales of *Wonder Woman* should increase significantly. "We're hoping that none of what I refer to as my 'Faithful 50,' [*the 50,000 or so* Next Men *readers*] currently read *Wonder Woman*. So if I don't lose any of the people who are currently reading *WW*, and I add my 50,000, we'll have a book that's doing somewhere just over 110,000, which is very strong in today's marketplace."

The chance to work on a title with a larger audience potential than his *Next Men* was something Byrne has been shopping around for. "I've been doing creator-owned stuff for an independent company for three years, and fans sometimes forget about you," he says. "It was time to do something to remind people of who this legendary, dwindling, non-entity named John Byrne is."

Ever since he received the assignment, Byrne has been saying that Wonder Woman will be his Thor; referring of course to when Walt Simonson—after 20 years in the business—took over Thor and overnight became "that new guy."

From the perspective of Kupperberg, he is very excited having Byrne work on the book: "John and I go way back, we both got into the business around the same time, and we've been friends for years." Still, when Kupperberg called on Byrne, it was as a writer. "I knew that writing a monthly book wouldn't be a stretch for John, and I wanted to see what his take on the character would be." When Byrne not only agreed to write, but pencil, ink and letter it as well, Kupperberg was thrilled. "We'd get him in here to staple it if we could," Kupperberg joked. "He's one of the most talented creators in the business."

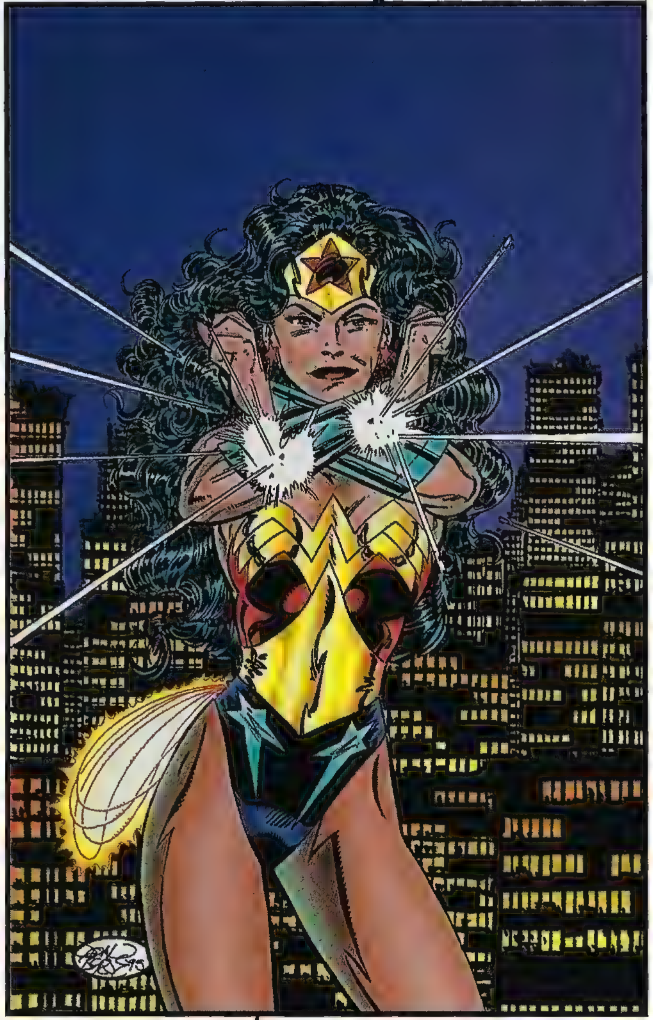
When asked how long he plans to remain on the title, Byrne (who, as of the end of March, had completed his first issue and was working on the second) responded "More than one, but probably less than 100." Still, if he did remain for the full hundred, his final issue would be #200, which just might prove to be a lure too tempting to resist. "My contract with DC is for 12 issues, but I have 16 plotted, so we'll see." Kupperberg chimed in that he and Byrne had already discussed about three years worth of stories, and that he certainly hoped that Byrne would remain on the title for at least that long.

As for Byrne's own *Next Men*, and other Legend projects, he won't leave them languishing. "I could easily do two, two-and-a-half books a month, but I'm trying not to do that much work these days."

Currently, Byrne is working on *Wonder Woman* plus several special projects for both DC and Legend that will take him through the end of this year, after which he'll consider relaunching *Next Men*. "I've got the next issue of *Next Men* written," says Byrne, "so its sort of sitting there festering."

As for Byrne's plans for the Amazing Amazon, he intends to weave the oncoming story out of the established mosaic that is Wonder Woman's history, rather than simply shoehorn her into an "event" of epic proportions. "When I first came on the book, the current team of Kupperberg, Messner-Lobes, and Deodato were building to a big conclusion in issue #100. My first issue is #101, and I thought, 'This is great, this is the first time in years that I'm being handed one of the big characters of yore, and *not* being asked to do a major refit—I can just come on and have fun with it.' But of course within two weeks, I was starting to think that I want to change this, and I want to change that, and I want to mess with the other thing."

There is a major storyline that will crop up about halfway into his first year on the book that is left-handedly being referred to as Wonder Woman's *Death Of Superman* storyline. While he was understandably reluctant to discuss the story itself, Byrne indicated that it would be along the lines of the *Death Of Superman*/breaking of Batman's back level, and it would involve some major threads from her past as well as new elements that Byrne is introducing. "It is entirely story-driven," says Byrne. "It is not an event that is going to occur. We're not going to kill her, get her pregnant or anything like that."



Given the above, the initial alterations that Byrne is making (other than some artistic licenses with her costume), is that he's moving her out of Boston to the fictitious Gateway City; cutting the umbilical to Paradise Island; bringing in some different foes for her to square off against (not necessarily new characters, but established DC villains); and he is giving her back the glass airplane. Not to mention that—as Byrne likes to make an entrance—his first story arc has Wonder Woman going up against Darkseid, playing off something Byrne set up years ago in *Action* #600.

Unlike some of the other established characters that Byrne has worked on in the past, Wonder Woman isn't really one he grew up reading, and thus his approach to her will differ from the approach he's taken with other long-time characters. "I don't know if I can ever say that I was a fan, because when I was a kid, I never read Wonder Woman in her own book, because obviously that was a girl's book." Still, he knew of the character because he saw her in *Justice League*. However, he always felt that there was something to the character that was never fully realized.

After looking at where she's been, and considering all his options, Byrne has decided to make *Wonder Woman* into a straight-out superhero book. "There's going to be a lot of punching and hitting, lifting tanks and breaking big things," he says.

Looking over his own career, Byrne felt that he has always been pointing in this direction; and perhaps so, considering the work he did on Sue Storm, She-Hulk, the Scarlet Witch, and Babe. With these characters he was developing strong, self-willed, self-reliant, don't-fuck-with-me female characters, and he feels it's only natural that he wound up being handed Wonder Woman.

"Of course, a large percentage of the fan population, when they first heard about it, evidently expected me to do a She-Hulk thing with her," says Byrne. "Yeah, guys, I think I'll just make it a wacky, funny book." Anyone looking for him to turn Wonder Woman into She-Hulk can forget it, as the closest he'll take the Amazon Princess to the Emerald Behemoth is that he's tacked She-Hulk's face onto Wonder Woman's body. "I spent about a week trying to get my Wonder Woman face right, then I just said the Hell with it and used my She-Hulk face. She won't be green, so it won't be that obvious."

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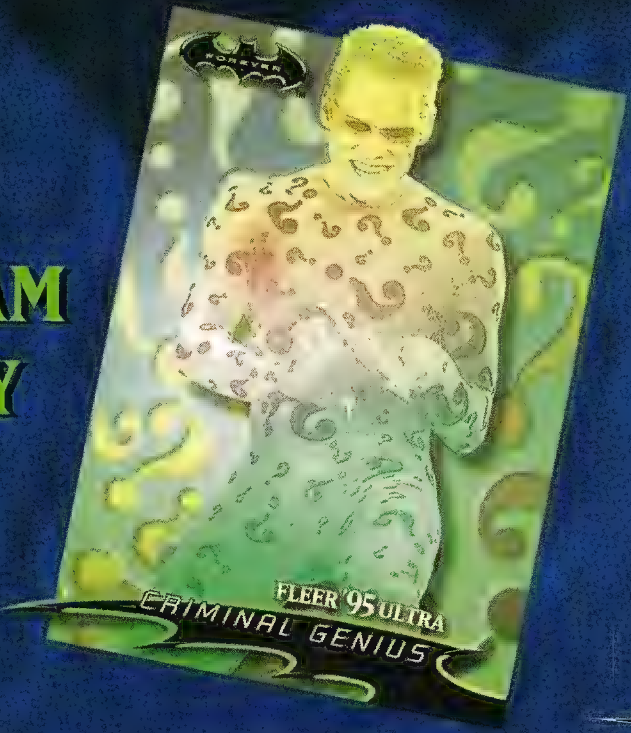
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MAGIC K

Tired of being TRaMPLED BY a FORCE OF NaTUR
some damage of your own. Here's everything yo

by DAN AMRICH & MIKE MERTENS

HOW TO PLAY MAGIC: THE GATHERING—IN PLAIN ENGLISH

If you've already bought yourself a *Magic* deck, no doubt you took one look at the tiny-but-thick rule booklet and threw it away. The rules are too complicated for mere mortals to grasp easily, and if you have any concept of how to play at all, it's probably because a friend taught you what you needed to know. Consider us your new best friend—here's the basics of *Magic* for dummies.

Okay. You've got a starter deck and a couple of boosters all mixed together in one unholy mess. You've also got a piece of paper and a pen, with "20" written down on it for your health points. You're ready to play. Find a friend (assuming you have one) and deal yourself seven cards. You'll see a number of different types of cards—Land, Summon, Sorcery, Artifact, Enchantments, Instant and Interrupt. The type is listed at the lower left of the picture, just above the text box.

LAND: You'll have a lot of these. You'll need a lot of these. Lands produce the *mana* (magic) you'll need to use all the other cards in your deck.

SUMMON [CREATURE]: These are your primary instruments of destruction, your footsoldiers in the magical war. Skeletons, dwarves, goblins, merfolk, whatever. The circles in the upper right corner stand for how much mana you need to use that creature in the game. The lower right corner of the card has two numbers and a slash, like 2/2. The first number is its *power* (offense) and the second is its *toughness* (defense). These determine how much of an ass-kicking your creature can deliver and how much punishment he can take.

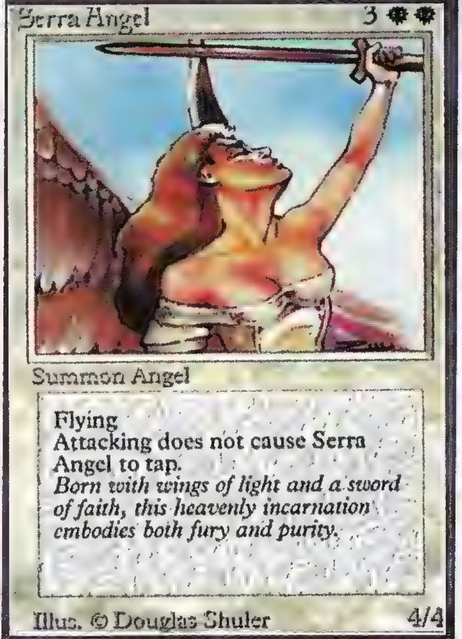
SORCERY: Non-creature magic spells. They can cause damage, protect you from damage, change the rules and even raise the dead.

ARTIFACT: Special physical objects that you can call into play along with your creatures.

ENCHANTMENT: These cards enhance, cripple and otherwise affect other cards in play.

INSTANT: Just what you'd think—these cards modify creatures, players or gameplay as soon as they're played. One of the "fast effects" you'll hear people talk about. You can use 'em at any time during either player's turn.

INTERRUPT: The other "fast effect." Instants can be played at any time, but Interrupts can only be used at specific times in the game, usually to prevent something from happening.


Serra Angel
3
Summon Angel
Flying
Attacking does not cause Serra Angel to tap.
Born with wings of light and a sword of faith, this heavenly incarnation embodies both fury and purity.
Illus. © Douglas Shuler
4/4

With that in mind, take your turn.

STEP 1: UNTAP. When you *tap* a card, that just means you're using it. To show that you've used it, you turn it sideways on the table; untapping it means turning it back and making the card usable again. This is the first step in the cycle, but you can't do it at the start of the game since you don't have any cards in play yet. Next.

STEP 2: UPKEEP. Again, this is a step that won't matter until you're further along in the game. Just know that when something says it takes place during the Upkeep, like you take damage or gain or whatever, this is when you do it. Next.

STEP 3: DRAW. This you can actually do now—take a card from your deck and put it in your hand. You should now have eight cards (you start with seven; do the math).

STEP 4: MAIN. This is where it can get a little hairy. During the Main phase of your turn, you can play a land, summon a creature, and/or make an attack. So, let's say you've got a Swamp card in your hand, and you want to play it. Put it on the table. From now on, as long as that card stays in play, you can use it to generate one point of black mana (see the little skull in the circle? That's the symbol for black mana). You can only play one land card per turn. As soon as you play a land card, you can tap it for mana, if you choose. All tapped mana becomes part of your *mana pool*.

You still have seven cards in your hand, and probably have a few creatures or artifacts, like Drudge Skeletons or a Juggernaut. But you can't play any of them yet, since you don't have enough mana on the table. You need the number and combination of mana listed in the upper right corner of the card in order to bring it into play. The Skeletons, for instance, need two points of mana to join the game—one black and one of any other color (that's what the 1 in a gray circle means, any color). The Juggernaut needs four mana of any color. Keep dreaming.

You can only play one land per turn and you don't have enough mana to play any other cards, so it looks like you're done with Main. Phew.

STEP 5: DISCARD. If you have more than

INGDOM

E with Unholy Strength? Well, prepare to inflict
u need to know to master Magic: the Gathering.

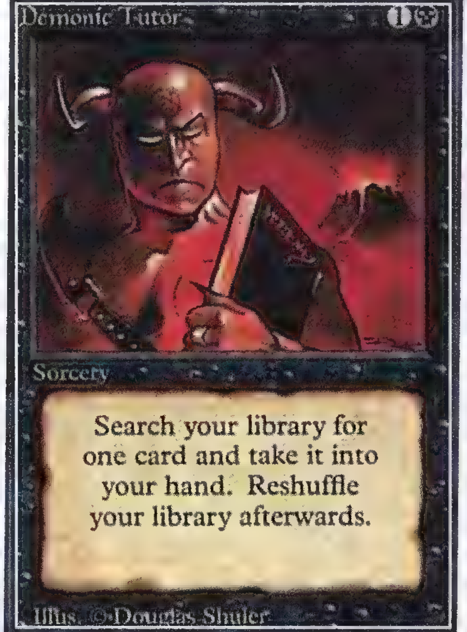
seven cards at this point, you've got to get rid of the extras and put them in a pile off to the side called the *graveyard*. But you have just seven cards right now, so you have to keep them all—you *can't* discard unless you have more than seven cards. So skip this step this time around.

STEP 6: END. Since you have so many options in one turn, the other person probably isn't going to be able to tell when you're done. So tell them. Most people also knock on the table to show they're done.

Now, hand the magazine to your friend (we'll call him Dick) and have them follow the same list of rules. He plays a Mountain card—red mana-producing land—and turns it sideways, to show he's tapping it. This means Dick's going to do something, possibly nasty, with that one point of red mana he's just unleashed. He could be summoning a low-power red creature, like Mons Goblin Raiders, or he could play a red Instant spell like Lightning Bolt to damage you. No, it's Mons Goblin Raiders. Dick puts the card on the table and announces he's done. Dick would love to attack you with those Raiders, but he can't, since creatures can't attack on the turn they're summoned. He'll have to wait until next turn. However, now that the Raiders are out there, Dick can use them to defend himself—they've got a toughness of 1. That might not sound like much, but you don't have any cards on the table, so compared to you, he's God.

Your turn again. You don't have anything to untap, and nothing affects you during your upkeep. So far, so good. You draw another card; it's an Island, a blue mana land. That's cool—it will give you the two total mana you need to summon the Drudge Skeletons. You place the Island on the table and immediately turn it sideways to show you're tapping it now. Turn the Swamp card sideways, too. Now you can put the Drudge Skeletons on the table and you're pretty much done. The land cards stay tapped until your next turn—that's the price you pay.

Okay, Dick is up. He untaps his Mountain in play and draws a card. He puts down another Mountain card—now he's got two reds in his mana pool. Dick taps his Goblin Raiders and says he's attacking. Whee, bloodshed! You have two main options now—block the attack with a creature of your own, or take the one point of damage. Being an unfeeling military commander, you say the Skeletons will block. This, unfortunately, kills them—the Raiders' power is equal to your Skeletons' toughness. But, your Skeletons' power is equal to the *Raiders'* toughness, so they *also* die. Your creatures killed each other. Now, if you'd had a spare point of black mana, your Skeletons could have regenerated—certainly you've noticed that little skull icon on the Skeletons card in the text box. But, since all your mana is still tapped from bringing them into existence in the first place, you don't have any spare magic lying around to bring them back to life. So everybody dies, and each player's creature goes to their respective graveyard. War is hell.


Demonic Tutor 1

Sorcery

Search your library for one card and take it into your hand. Reshuffle your library afterwards.

Illus. © Douglas Shuler

Dick isn't pleased about the situation either, and suddenly taps one of his Mountains. Before you know it, he's played a Lightning Bolt—an Instant spell that does three damage to any target. And guess who that target is. He targets you directly (plus you have nothing on your side that he could choose to target, anyway) and you lose three life points, bringing you down to 17. Ouch.

And so it goes, back and forth, until one person is dead.

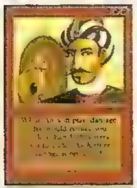
THINGS YOU'LL NEED LATER

As you play, you'll get confused and start cursing. Congratulations! You're firmly under the *Magic* spell. Maybe some of the stuff here will help answer your questions.

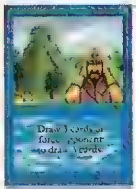
- Who goes first? A popular method is to look at the bottom of your deck—whichever player's card has a higher casting cost goes first. In a tie, go on to the next card. Or, hey, just flip a friggin' coin.
- The official rules state that players must put up an ante before each game. That means you cut your opponent's deck and take one card out—if you win, you keep that card for good. Naturally, your opponent does the same thing. Some players (especially rabid card collectors or folks with killer decks) don't like this rule and, in fact, it's omitted from tournament play. Find out before each game if you're playing for ante or not.
- Always be *aware* of the upkeep, even though you might not always have a specific action

TOP 10 MOST WANTED LIST

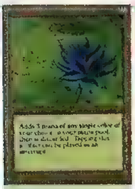
Get a good look, 'cause you'll never be able to touch them in real life—these are the high-priced Magic cards everybody wants.



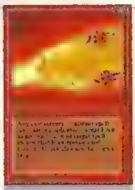
Ali From Cairo (*Arabian Nights*, Rare, Red) Our Arabian pal Ali is invaluable late in the game—as long as he's in play, he prevents your life from going below one, no matter how much damage gets thrown at you. Better to be barely alive than not at all.


Draw 3 cards or force opponent to draw 3 cards.

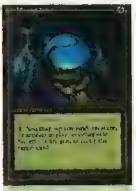
Ancestral Recall (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, Rare, Blue) For one blue mana point, Ancestral Recall forces you or your opponent to draw three cards. It's got a cheap casting cost, it speeds up the game, it's a handy card in a combo with Fork and it's out of print.



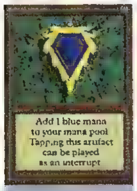
Black Lotus (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, Rare, Artifact) Probably the most sought-after card for rarity, Black Lotus is a zero-casting-cost artifact that you sacrifice for three points of mana in your choice of color. The kingpin card for killing your opponent on the first turn.



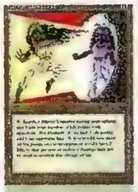
Fork (*Revised*, Rare, Red) Fork duplicates any sorcery or instant spell—your own or your opponents'. Infinitely useful to amplify your own attacks or to give your opponent a taste of their own medicine. It's still in print, but they're in major demand.



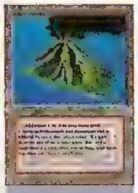
Icy Manipulator (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, Uncommon, Artifact) Tap the Icy Manipulator to tap the target card of your choice. Useful for sidelining those pesky blocking creatures, and has serious value in many combos. And scary art to boot.


Add 1 blue mana to your mana pool. Tapping this artifact can be played as an interrupt

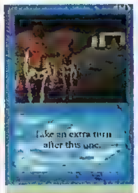
Moxes (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, Rare, Artifacts) Imagine a basic land as a zero-cost artifact and you've got a Mox. There's a Mox for each color, denoted by the precious stone on the card—Mox Sapphire produces 1 blue mana, Mox Ruby produces red, etc.



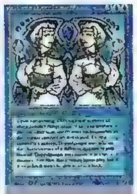
Mirror Universe (*Legends*, Rare, Colorless) Allows you to swap life points with your opponent. If you've got 3 life and they've got 15, sacrifice Mirror Universe and SHAZAM!—you're suddenly in control. Really, really cruel, with cool art by Foglio.



Multi-lands (*Revised*, Rare, Multiple colors) These lands, like Tundra and Volcanic Island, can produce mana of two colors. Badlands, a red/black multi-land, gives you either red or black mana—your choice. Mana options aplenty.


Take an extra turn after this one.

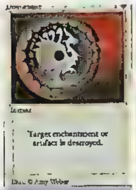
Time Walk (Alpha/Beta/Unlimited, Rare, Blue) Take an extra turn. Entire games have been won or lost by skillful and/or nasty manipulation of Time Walk—six and seven turns in a row aren't unheard of. Good combo players can Time Walk all over their opponents.



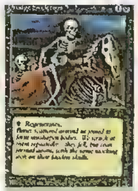
.Vesuvian Doppleganger (*Revised*, Rare, Blue) The Doppleganger takes the form of any creature in play—like a Clone, except the Doppleganger has to stay blue. But unlike the Clone, the 'ganger can change into a different creature every turn. Hoo-hah.

TOP 10 POWERHOUSE COMMONS

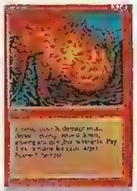
Powerful and easy to find, these cards are excellent starting points for building your first deck. No player should be without 'em.


Target enchantment or artifact is destroyed.

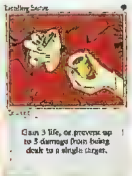
Disenchant (*Revised*, White) Target enchantment is destroyed. Great for escaping traps and avoiding problems before they start, as many players like to use Enchantments as the basis of their strategy.



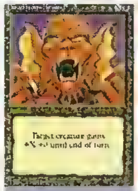
Drudge Skeletons (*Revised*, Black) Who cares if they're only 1/1—they regenerate with one black mana. Kill 'em and they keep coming back. They're the undead. They're cool. And you've probably got a lot of 'em.



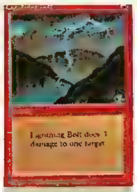
Fireball (*Revised*, Red) Pump one of these babies as full of any color mana you like to cause massive, *massive* destruction to as many targets as you like, including your opponent directly. The ultimate red Sorcery.


Gain 3 life, or prevent up to 3 damage from being dealt to a single target.

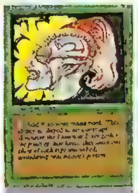
Healing Salve (*Revised*, White) For just one white mana point, Healing Salve lets you prevent up to 3 points of damage *or* gain 3 life—your choice. Talk about getting more for your mana.



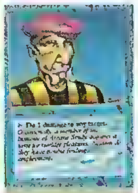
Howl From Beyond (*Revised*, Black) Consider it a Fireball for a creature—put whatever amount of mana you want into this to increase an attacker's power. And it's an Instant, for maximum flexibility.



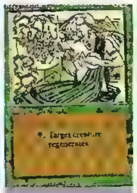
Lightning Bolt (*Revised*, Red) Spend one red mana to do three damage to the target of your choice—a creature, the other player, wherever. Major bang for the buck, and probably the coolest easy attack.



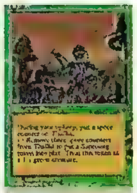
Llanowar Elves (*Revised*, Green) Again, a simple 1/1 creature with a nice perk—tap them to add green mana to your mana pool. Anything that generates extra mana is automatically cool.



Prodigal Sorcerer (*Revised*, Blue) Tim (named for *Monty Python And The Holy Grail's* enchanter) is weak at 1/1, but he can be tapped to do 1 point of damage to any target you want. Useful in lots of strategies.


Target creature regenerates.

Regeneration (Revised, Green) Enchant your favorite or most useful creatures with Regeneration—then, every time they die, bring them back for just one green mana. Extremely annoying to opponents.



Thallid (*Fallen Empires*, Green) Every three turns, Thallids spawn another 1/1 green creature, a Saproling. A creature that automatically reproduces itself makes for an easy collection of expendable soldiers.

during that step. For instance, if you draw a card and then realize you were supposed to do something in your upkeep, some unforgiving veteran players won't let you go back.

- When a card says "target," like Fireball or Lightning Bolt, you can choose one of your opponent's creatures, or your opponent themselves and remove their life points directly.
- A player doesn't have to block an attack. If you want to take the damage instead of killing a creature, that's fine. It's a calculated risk and all part of the strategy.
- "Graveyard" and "Removed from the game entirely" are different things. Dead/destroyed creatures in the graveyard can be brought back to life by certain cards (Animate Dead, Resurrection, etc.) but "removed" creatures are gone for good.
- Yes, you can block one attacking creature with two (or more) of your own. So, if there's a Force of Nature making your life miserable with 8 damage, you can block him with four 2/2 creatures, eight 1/1 creatures, whatever.
- Some cards have special abilities, listed in the upper left corner of the text box. Here's a quick rundown:

"ON-BOARD ENCHANTMENTS": Creatures like Drudge Skeletons or Frozen Shade feature a mana icon with a colon, and then an ability. Spend one black mana on the Skeletons after they've been killed, for instance, and they regenerate. For every black mana spent on the Frozen Shade, he gets a +1/+1 boost—spend five black mana at the outset of your attack and he's a 5/6 creature until the end of the turn. It's like having two cards in one!

The most terrifying thing about the Craw Wurm is probably the horrible crashing sound it makes as it speeds through the forest. This noise is so loud it echoes through the trees and seems to come from all directions at once.

Trample
Ball Lightning may attack on the turn during which it is summoned. Ball Lightning is buried at the end of the turn during which it is summoned.

[LAND]WALK: Cards with some sort of landwalk—"Swampwalk," "Islandwalk," etc.—can't be blocked if your opponent has those lands—swamps, islands, etc.—in play.

FLYING: Flying creatures can't be blocked by non-flying creatures, but *they* can block both flying *and* non-flying attackers. This is one reason why Sengir Vampires and Serra Angels are so useful.

BANDS: Banding lets two creatures group together as one. For instance, if you band a Benalish Hero enchanted with Unholy Strength (making it a 2/3 creature) with a 5/3 Juggernaut, they act as one big 7/6 attacker (that's right, just add up the numbers on each side of the slash). If you decide to block with banded creatures, you get to choose how the damage is distributed among your blockers—a little to the Juggernaut, a little to the Hero, and neither gets killed. This can obviously get pretty complicated, and in truth, there's no real way to make it easy. Thankfully, you won't find a lot of cards with Banding ability, so you may not need to worry about this until after you've played for a while.

TRAMPLE: These creatures keep doing damage after they've been blocked. For instance, if you have Orgg, a 6/6 Trample card, and your opponent only blocks with a wimpy 1/1 Thrull, the Thrull takes one damage and dies, and the other five points go on to hurt your opponent directly.

RAMPAGE: This is more rare than Banding, and roughly as confusing. Rampage always comes with a number attached, like "Rampage: 2." That means that for every creature over one that blocks the rampaging creature, the attacker gains, in this case, +2/+2. So, if you block a Wolverine Pack with two creatures, they're instantly pumped up +2/+2, and you have to find something else to block them with—and then they get *another* +2/+2, and the situation just keeps getting worse and worse. The answer, of course, is to block with just one creature, or simply take the damage. But, as we said, the Rampage ability isn't very common; you won't find it on any cards earlier than *Legends*.

Raise Dead
Sorcery
Bring one creature from your graveyard to your hand.

Holy Armor
Enchant Creature
Target creature gains +0/+2. ●: +0/+1
Illus. © Melissa Benson

MAGIC TRICKS: COMBOS THAT KILL

Okay, so you've just started playing *Magic*. You don't have a huge collection of expensiuve, out of print cards. Does this mean you can't win? Hell no. These combos are some of our sneakiest, and they all use either *Revised* or *Fallen Empires* cards—stuff that's still widely available, and should be relatively easy to find from dealers at reasonable prices.

Thicket Basilisk (*Revised*/Uncommon/Green)
Lure (*Revised*/Uncommon/Green)
Regeneration (*Revised*/Common/Green)
Attack with the Basilisk, then use Lure to force all your opponent's creatures to block. They'll all die defending it (Basilisk kills anything that blocks it), then you can spend one green mana to regenerate your Basilisk.

Fungusaur (*Revised*/Rare/Green)
Rod Of Ruin (*Revised*/Uncommon/Artifact)
OR **Prodigal Sorcerer**
(*Revised*/Common/Blue)
Every time the Fungusaur takes damage and lives, he gains +1/+1. Use Tim or the Rod to hit the 'saur for one point...every turn. In a few turns, he's a serious menace.

El Hajjâj (*Revised*/Rare/Black)
Dwarven Warriors (*Revised*/Common/Red)
Howl From Beyond (*Revised*/Common/Black)
Tap the Dwarven Warriors to make El Hajjâj unblockable. Once that's done, play Howl From Beyond for all the mana you can. You gain the amount of life your opponent loses.

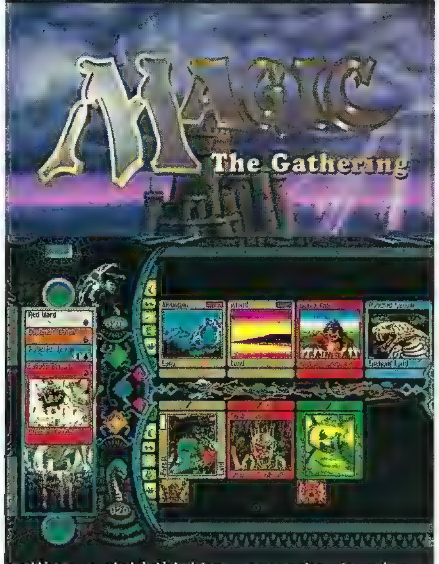
MAGICAL HACKING

Chuck those archaic cards and boot up your PC—MicroProse unleashes Magic: The Gathering, the computer game

How do you accurately reproduce one of the world's most free-structured card games in strict bits and bytes? Very, very carefully, say the folks at MicroProse—who recently released the official PC version of *Magic: the Gathering*. The CD-ROM-only version of *Magic* allows players to build their own decks, using cards from the *Revised* release plus the *Arabian Nights*, *Antiquities*, *Legends* and *The Dark* expansion sets—most of which have been out of print for at least a year. All the cards are faithfully reproduced in hi-res 256-color Super VGA graphics, so there's no problem telling your Clones apart from your Dopplegangers.

The computer version of *Magic* offers two modes of play; a normal stand-alone game and an interactive online game. Players can either battle the computer or dial up a soon-to-be-announced online service and be matched up with another *Magic* player—much like what the XBAND does with Genesis and SNES games.

The real *Magic* trick for MicroProse was getting a rigid-thinking computer to play a notoriously flexible strategy game with plenty of sudden and special rule exceptions. *Magic* features some impressive AI (artificial intelligence) that not only understands the rules of the game, but knows exactly how and when to break them. Plus, the program is kind to newbies who want to learn the game—presumably so you don't feel so bad when it kicks your ass. **—DA**



MAGIC MAN

With Acclaim Comics' new Magic series, fantasy writer Jeff Gómez bridges the gap between card game and comic book

FLUX: What was your first exposure to *Magic: the Gathering?*

GOMEZ: Before I came to Acclaim Comics, I'd been into gaming for many years. I was one of the original *D&D* players, and I realized that the creators of *Magic: the Gathering* were trying to build a world with the cards, a huge mosaic. And I thought that was really the hinging point on which we could build comic books and tell stories, using their characters and lands.

FLUX: Do you get everything approved by Wizards of the Coast?

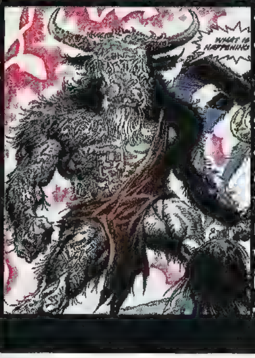
GOMEZ: Wizards approves the plots, the pencils and the covers. Everything that we do in the comics is official canon—it's part of the official history of the world of Dominaria. Anything that you see in the comics should be playable. Shawn Carnes from Wizards of the Coast writes a column for every issue, explaining how to use that issue's actions and strategy in the card game.

FLUX: How do you balance the storytelling aspect with the game authenticity?

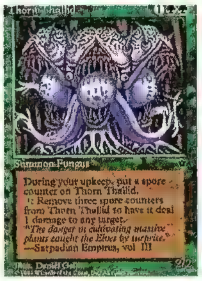
GOMEZ: With much care. *[laughs]* Actually, some people have said there are too many game allusions, but most readers say that it gives them a big hook into what's going on. I want you to be able to take any comic that we put out, remove the *Magic* altogether and still have a solid story. But at the same time, I wanted to let everyone know that this is definitely *Magic: the Gathering* that they're picking up.

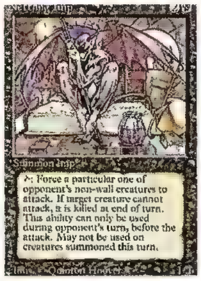
FLUX: Are you working from a complete history of *Magic* that most people will never get to read?

GOMEZ: Well, we're trying to assemble reams of notes that are scattered all across WotC, and they're going to be putting out a sort of atlas and history of Dominaria sometime this summer. There is an ultimate plan, and little by little, over the next few years, we'll be releasing that story. **—DA**


WHAT IS HAPPENING

Channel (*Revised*/Uncommon/Green)
Fireball (*Revised*/Common/Red)
Channel reroutes your life into mana. If you've got more life than your opponent, use Channel to make a really big Fireball with all your remaining life. Game over. Beware a blue Counterspell.


Thorn Thallid
Summon Fungus
During your upkeep, put a spore counter on Thorn Thallid.
: Remove three spore counters from Thorn Thallid to have it deal 1 damage to any target.
"The danger in cultivating massive plants caught the Elves by surprise."
—Sarpadian Empires, vol. III
Illus. Daniel Gelon
2/2


Nettling Imp
Summon Imp
: Force a particular one of opponent's non-wall creatures to attack. If target creature cannot attack, it is killed at end of turn. This ability can only be used during opponent's turn, before the attack. May not be used on creatures summoned this turn.
Illus. Quinton Hoover
1/1

Orcish Artillery (*Revised*, Uncommon, Red)
Circle Of Protection: Red (*Revised*, Common, White)
Tap the Artillery to do 2 damage to any target, but you take 3 in the process—unless you spend 1 colorless and activate the CoP: Red to protect yourself. Simple but sneaky.

Keldon Warlord (*Revised*, Uncommon, Red)
Living Lands (*Revised*, Rare, Green) OR
Kormus Bell (*Revised*, Rare, Artifact)
The Warlord's stats rely on the number of creatures you have in play. Living Lands turns all your forests into creatures; Kormus Bell turns all your swamps into creatures. Use them to make a truly monstrous Warlord.

Magical Hack (*Revised*, Rare, Blue)
Lifetap (*Revised*, Uncommon, Blue) OR
Tsunami (*Revised*, Uncommon, Green) OR
Flashfires (*Revised*, Uncommon, Red)
Magical Hack wreaks havoc on any card by letting you change one land-related word to another land-related word of your choice (i.e., "plains" to "swamps"). Used with any of these three land-affecting cards, you can pretty much change the laws of the land.

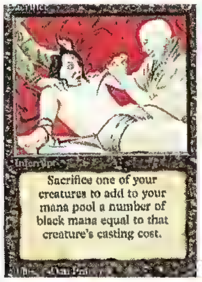
Elvish Farmer (*Fallen Empires*, Rare, Green)
Fungal Bloom (*Fallen Empires*, Rare, Green)
Use the Farmer to create and then sacrifice Saprolings for life points. Use the Bloom to speed up his Saproling production. A Thallid will help generate more Saprolings, too, but that's optional.

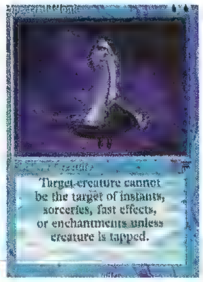
Conversion (*Revised*, Uncommon, White)
Sunglasses Of Urza (*Revised*, Rare, Artifact)
Conversion makes mountains produce white mana. The Sunglasses give you the option to change white mana into red. Used together, these two give you almost limitless mana options in a red/white deck.

Nettling Imp (*Revised*, Rare, Black)
Royal Assassin (*Revised*, Rare, Black)
The Imp forces one of your opponent's creatures to attack—and you get to choose which one. The Assassin destroys any tapped card. Instant death.

Ebon Praetor (*Fallen Empires*, Rare, Black)
Unstable Mutation (*Revised*, Common, Blue)
Soul Exchange (*Fallen Empires*, Uncommon, Black)
Thrull (*Fallen Empires*, Common, Black)
The Praetor is formidable enough as a 7/7 Trample creature—but he loses -2/-2 every turn unless you sacrifice a creature. Mutate him as many times as you can to make him even more powerful, then let him waste away. After he's dead, bring him back with Soul Exchange—sacrifice the Thrull and the Praetor enters play as a 9/9 Trampler. If the game's not over by two turns after this, you really, *really* suck.

Psychic Venom (*Revised*, Common, Blue)
Mana Short (*Revised*, Rare, Blue) AND/OR
Power Sink (*Revised*, Common, Blue)
Psychic Venom does 2 damage to your opponent every time they tap a specific enchanted land. They'll want to avoid using that land, but Mana Short will force them to tap *all* their lands. Similarly, using Power Sink, an Interrupt, with enough mana poured into it will cause a similar situation (and Power Sinks are common).


Interrupt
Sacrifice one of your creatures to add to your mana pool a number of black mana equal to that creature's casting cost.
Illus. Dan Frazier


Target creature cannot be the target of instants, sorceries, fast effects, or enchantments unless creature is tapped.

TIMEWALKING: THE FUTURE OF *MAGIC*

Well, the *Revised* edition of the game should still be available by the time you read this, so get it while you can—it's going through some changes. Its new official title is *Magic: the Gathering, Fourth Edition*, as some cards from previous expansion sets are added into the main set of cards and a few old favorites will be taken out of print (Wizards of the Coast ain't sayin' which ones). Land cards will be omitted from boosters (thank you!) and the familiar leaning-T "tap" icon will be replaced with an arrow denoting a 90-degree turn. These cards should be in stores now.

The *Ice Age* expansion set should be hitting stores around the time you read this, too, both as booster packs and full starter decks. Wizards plans to keep *Ice Age* in print for about a year, so there won't be any of the shortage problems the earlier expansions experienced. Later in the year, look for *Chronicles*, an expansion set that offers the greatest hits of *Arabian Nights*, *Legends* and other long-out-of-print sets. *Chronicles* cards will be white-bordered, so collectors won't lose the value of their black-bordered originals, but new players can still enjoy playing with some of the cool cards they missed.

For more Magic *info and detailed rules, check out* Magic: the Gathering Pocket Players' Guide, *a paperback from Wizards of the Coast that should be on sale wherever fine* Magic *cards are sold. Also, if you're online, check out the FTP site at marvin.macc.wisc.edu and snoop around the files in the /pub/deckmaster directory.*

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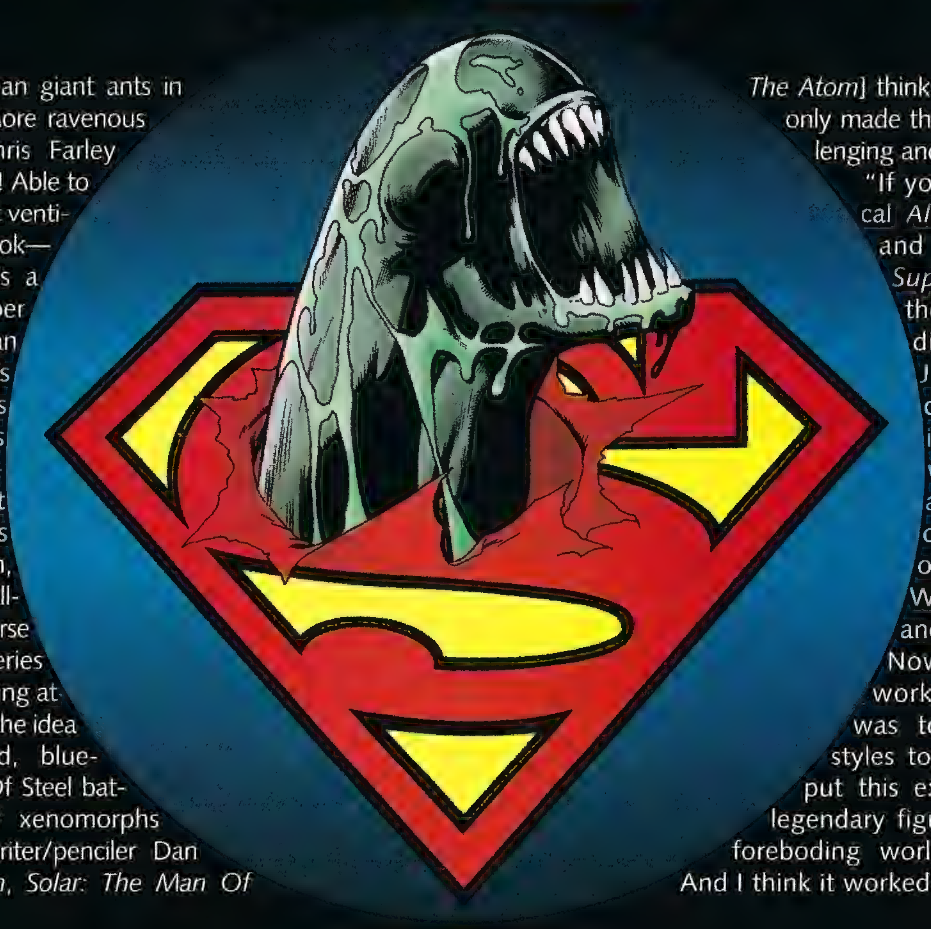
aLIENNaTION

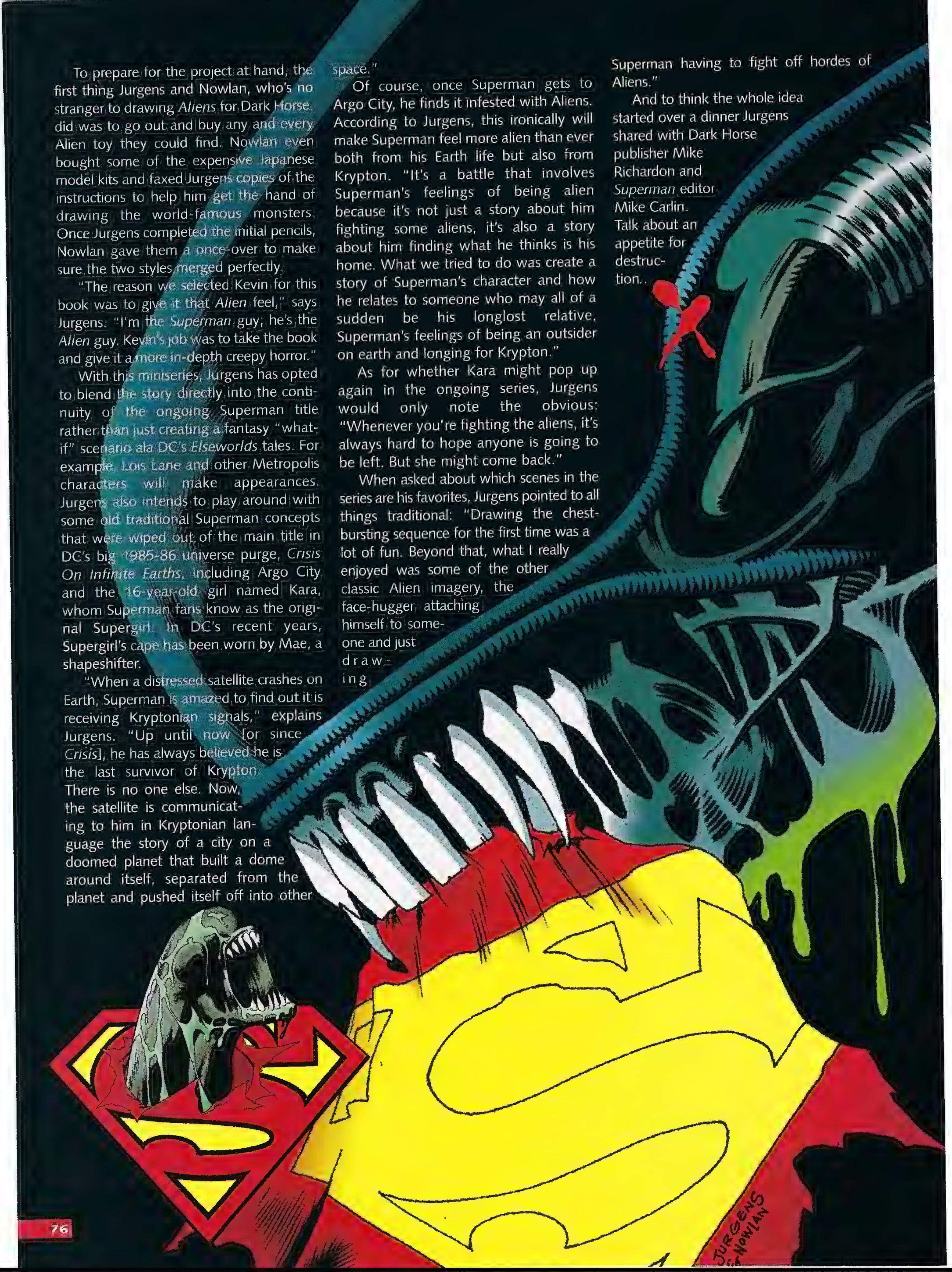
With Superman Vs. Aliens, Hollywood's most famous horde of acid-bleeders take on the Man Of Steel in a battle for alien supremacy. Writer/Penciler Dan Jurgens talks to FLUX and explains the basis for this ultimate war.

BY ANYA MARTIN



Grosser than giant ants in slime! More ravenous than Chris Farley on an eating binge! Able to crawl through tight ventilation tunnels! Look—up in the sky! It's a giant grasshopper with teeth! It's...an Alien? Or rather it's Alien vs. alien, as the Mother Planet's most vicious monsters duke it out with Krypton's favorite son, Superman, in an all-new DC/Dark Horse three-issue miniseries which began shipping at the end of May. If the idea of the red-caped, blue-Spandexed Man Of Steel battling a horde of xenomorphs seems strange, writer/penciler Dan Jurgens [*Superman*, *Solar: The Man Of The Atom*] thinks that the contrast only made the story more challenging and ultimately cooler.

"If you pick up a typical *Aliens* comic book and a typical *Superman* comic, they look incredibly different," says Jurgens. "To have done this purely in either style would have done a disservice to one or the other of the properties. What we [Jurgens and finisher Kevin Nowlan] really worked hard to do was to fuse the two styles together when we put this extremely colorful legendary figure into the dark foreboding world of the Alien. And I think it worked extremely well."



To prepare for the project at hand, the first thing Jurgens and Nowlan, who's no stranger to drawing *Aliens* for Dark Horse, did was to go out and buy any and every Alien toy they could find. Nowlan even bought some of the expensive Japanese model kits and faxed Jurgens copies of the instructions to help him get the hand of drawing the world-famous monsters. Once Jurgens completed the initial pencils, Nowlan gave them a once-over to make sure the two styles merged perfectly.

"The reason we selected Kevin for this book was to give it that *Alien* feel," says Jurgens. "I'm the *Superman* guy; he's the *Alien* guy. Kevin's job was to take the book and give it a more in-depth creepy horror."

With this miniseries, Jurgens has opted to blend the story directly into the continuity of the ongoing Superman title rather than just creating a fantasy "what-if" scenario ala DC's *Elseworlds* tales. For example, Lois Lane and other Metropolis characters will make appearances. Jurgens also intends to play around with some old traditional Superman concepts that were wiped out of the main title in DC's big 1985-86 universe purge, *Crisis On Infinite Earths*, including Argo City and the 16-year-old girl named Kara, whom Superman fans know as the original Supergirl. In DC's recent years, Supergirl's cape has been worn by Mae, a shapeshifter.

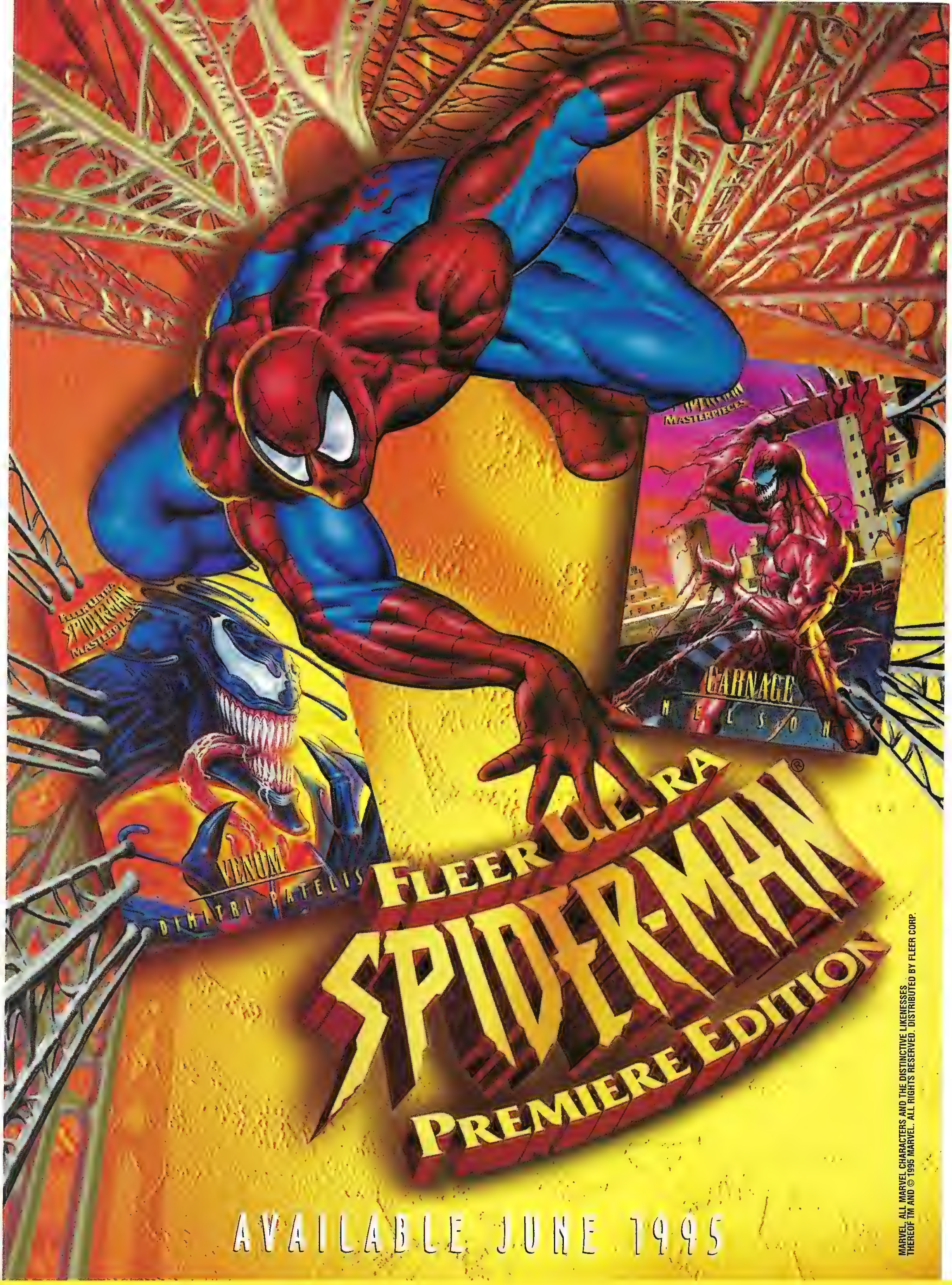
"When a distressed satellite crashes on Earth, Superman is amazed to find out it is receiving Kryptonian signals," explains Jurgens. "Up until now [or since *Crisis*], he has always believed he is the last survivor of Krypton. There is no one else. Now, the satellite is communicating to him in Kryptonian language the story of a city on a doomed planet that built a dome around itself, separated from the planet and pushed itself off into other space."

Of course, once Superman gets to Argo City, he finds it infested with Aliens. According to Jurgens, this ironically will make Superman feel more alien than ever both from his Earth life but also from Krypton. "It's a battle that involves Superman's feelings of being alien because it's not just a story about him fighting some aliens, it's also a story about him finding what he thinks is his home. What we tried to do was create a story of Superman's character and how he relates to someone who may all of a sudden be his longlost relative, Superman's feelings of being an outsider on earth and longing for Krypton."

As for whether Kara might pop up again in the ongoing series, Jurgens would only note the obvious: "Whenever you're fighting the aliens, it's always hard to hope anyone is going to be left. But she might come back."

When asked about which scenes in the series are his favorites, Jurgens pointed to all things traditional: "Drawing the chest-bursting sequence for the first time was a lot of fun. Beyond that, what I really enjoyed was some of the other classic Alien imagery, the face-hugger attaching himself to someone and just drawing Superman having to fight off hordes of Aliens."

And to think the whole idea started over a dinner Jurgens shared with Dark Horse publisher Mike Richardon and *Superman* editor Mike Carlin. Talk about an appetite for destruction.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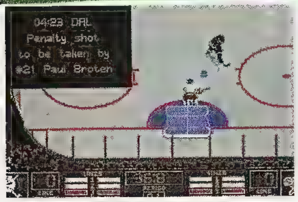
15 Essential CD-ROMS

CONTINUED FROM PG. 29

real-life counterparts (except your catcher, who throws like a damn sissy). Add in the play-by-play commentary by veteran broadcaster Al Michaels and you've got yourself one helluva computer baseball game.

10 NHL '95

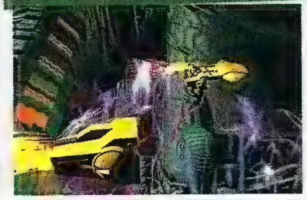
(Electronic Arts)



For years, Electronic Arts has dominated the 16-bit hockey market with their ground-breaking *NHL* series, and now they've brought their highly successful franchise title to the PC. *NHL '95* is a rink rat's dream, a fast-paced hockey contest that thrives on realism and authenticity rather than bells and whistles. On the ice, the action mimics that of a real NHL game: penalties, power plays, one-time shots, blocked shots, drop passes, poke checks, injuries, penalty shots—if it's a part of real hockey, it's in this game. The player animations are incredibly smooth, not to mention lifelike—for example, when you set up on a power play, the shorthanded team plays a zone defense. These players don't just move, they think. Off the ice, you can trade players, add or remove teams, alter your roster and follow the progress of each team as it chases after the Stanley Cup. With the bonus of real NHL teams and players, it all adds up to *NHL '95* being one of the most realistic sports games in town, and without a doubt the only hockey disc you'll ever need.

11 CREATURE SHOCK

(Virgin Interactive)



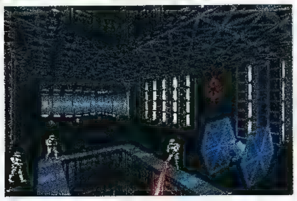
You are a UNS officer sent on a mission to rescue or retrieve the body of Captain Sumoki, pilot of the UNS Amazon. A distress signal was received from the Amazon after it encountered a giant space creature during its exploration of Saturn's moons. And your journey out into space is pure, unadulterated space shooter. Once you arrive, the action switches to a first-person adventure-type mode as you explore the alien spacecraft. The 3D rendered scenes between each part of your mission are nicely engineered, and the eerie soundtrack gives the game a spooky *2001: A Space Odyssey*-like feel. The only drawback to this otherwise terrific CD-ROM is the fact that you can't save your game—so be prepared to skip school for a few days.

12 SYSTEM SHOCK (Origin)

It's 2072. You are "Employee 2-4601," a hacker who got busted breaking into the computer system of the Citadel space station. After striking a deal with TriOptimum, the corporation that nailed you, you're fitted with a valuable neural implant and sent into a coma to heal. Six months later, your awakening is a rude one as you find the space station overrun with malfunctioning droids and mutant humans. With its *DOOM*-esque feel, true 3D environment and unprecedented graphic detail, *System Shock* will keep you glued to your monitor for weeks.

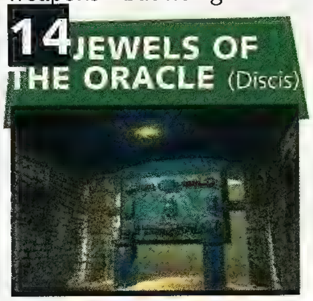
13 DARK FORCES

(LucasArts)



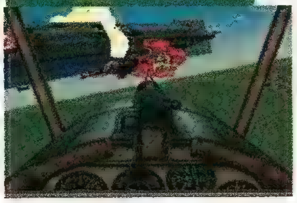
If any game could Force *Star Wars* fans to pony up the bucks for a CD-ROM drive, it's this. Using that oh-so-familiar first-person *DOOM*-style perspective, gamers take on the persona of Kyle Katarn, a rebel operative on a quest to stop the creation of the Dark Troopers, the Imperial Forces' new militia of super soldiers. *DF* features lots of missions, the ability to jump as well as look up & down, cameos by creatures and characters from the *Star Wars* movies (including Darth Vader, Boba Fett and Mon Mothma) and plenty of cool weapons—but no lightsaber.

14 JEWELS OF THE ORACLE (Discis)

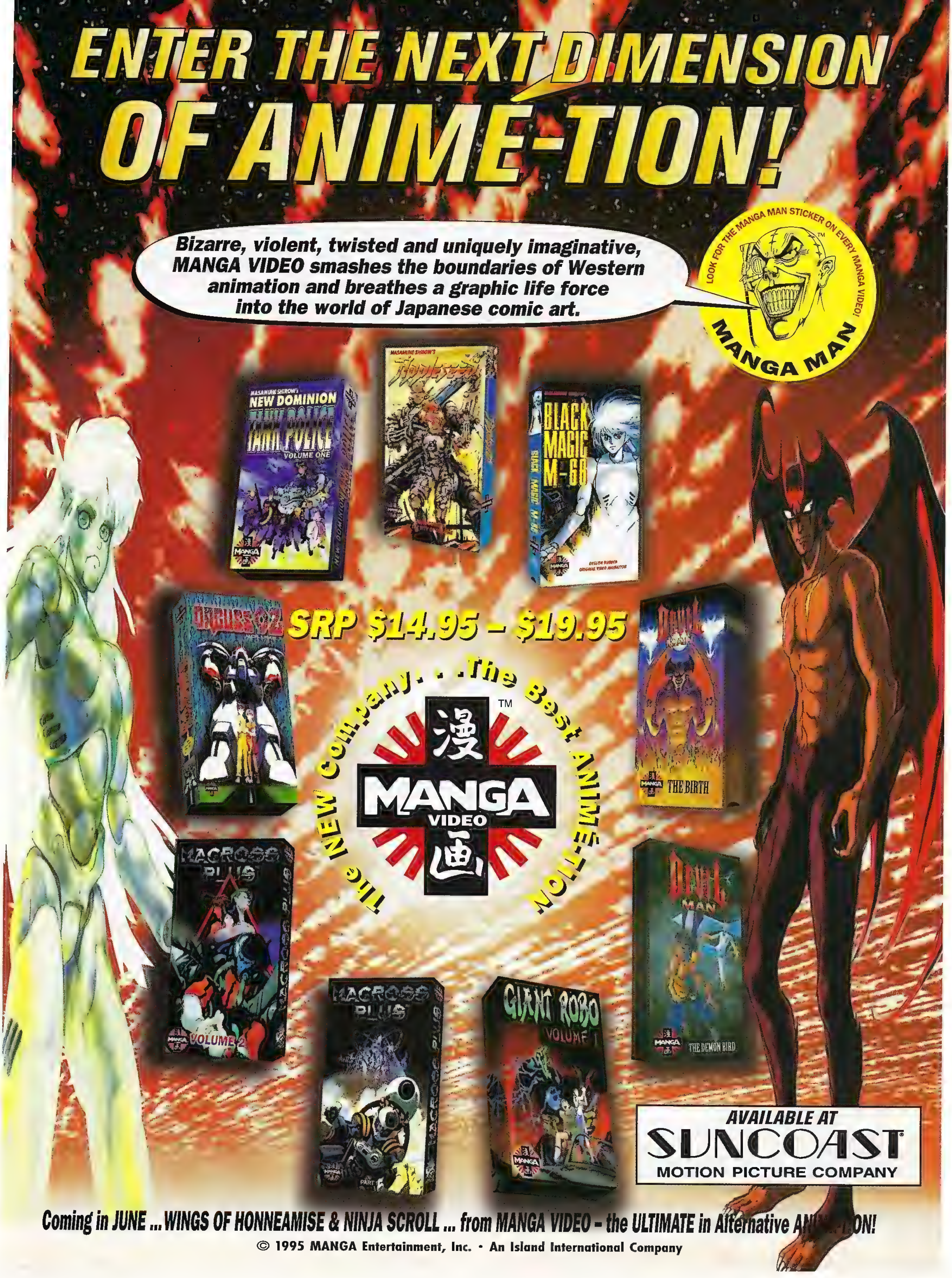


Have you finished *Myst* and need something new to satisfy your addiction to brain-bending puzzle games? *Jewels Of The Oracle* may be the fix. In this 3-D archaeological quest, you're the only one there, there's no shooting and you can't die—your only weapon is your mind. And while the puzzles in *Oracle* are simpler than those in *Myst*, they're in no way easier. The photorealistic graphics aren't as rich as those in *Myst*, but the gameplay is compelling enough to keep those longing for a new *Myst*-style adventure satisfied for many hours.

15 WINGS OF GLORY (Origin)



Imagine the brilliance of *NASCAR Racing* in the form of a WWI flight sim and you've got Origin's breathtaking new *Wings Of Glory*. Sitting in the cockpit of your Fokker Dr.I, hovering high over the countryside at 1100 feet while enemy planes come roaring in your direction is not only a sight to behold, but a gaming thrill second to none. And for those intimidated by all the radar screens, missile-locks and generally confusing gadgetry that often lights up the instrument panel, *Wings* takes place in yesteryear—which means you rely on sight, sounds and instinct to survive the furious dogfights. Still, there's a certain degree of difficulty here, and learning to handle your craft is essential to survival. But even nose-diving into the ground can be a beautiful thing with *Wings Of Glory*.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continued from pg 49

Sir Charles
Tyrone
Sphinx
Rhino

BARKLEY: SHUT UP AND JAM 2 (Accolade)

when Atari released *E.T.* for the 2600. They expected it to be huge, produced all the carts, and ended up filling a landfill with the ones that didn't move. [*laughs*] The nice thing about CD-ROMs is that you have a much shorter lead time, so it's safer to make your initial orders smaller then simply fill the demand as it comes."

FLUX: How confident are you that American consumers will embrace the Saturn and PlayStation when the 3DO and Jaguar didn't meet those expectations?

"I am confident that they will become viable platforms, but I also think that it'll take some time. **There's going to be a slow period over the next couple of years.** As for why the Saturn and PlayStation might make it where the 3DO didn't, they've got a few things going for them. First of all, the Saturn and PlayStation will already have a library of games when they launch in the US—but the 3DO and Jaguar really didn't have much software when they came out. So the fact that both the Saturn and PlayStation will have huge numbers of games upon their US launch will make it easier for them to sell where 3DO couldn't because they didn't have the software. Plus, Sony and Sega, especially Sega, are very established in the game area—but 3DO was new and didn't have that. And Atari did have that history, but too long ago to make a difference."

FLUX: How much life do you feel is left in the 16-bit market?

"If it's going to take a few years for the gaming world to make the jump from 16-bit to 32-bit, 16-bit games will continue to be produced. My feeling though is that it's going to be a much smaller population."

FLUX: Will Accolade be producing many 32-bit games?

"We have a few of our very lead title that we'll continue to produce on the Genesis platform—again with the philosophy of going for the hit-driven market. On the new platforms, we're going full force. We're taking our entire property line and bringing it across the new platforms."

FLUX: Accolade has always been involved in the PC games market. Do you feel the growing PC market has the potential to steal any thunder from the dedicated video game systems?

"The PC market really has been just a fraction of the dedicated game machine market—about 15% of the overall market. But almost every game publisher is going heavily into the PC market because we all feel that with the old game machines tapering off and the new machines not having an installed base, the PC already has however many million users they say are out there—so let's go there. I'm expecting a flood of new software in the next year for all systems, and I'm wondering what they stores are going to do with all that product—and it's a little frightening because that's what really started the crash back in the Atari 2600 era. Retailers just didn't have the shelf space and couldn't handle the inventory—and nobody wants to see that happen again."

FLUX: Maybe shelf space wouldn't be such a problem if game publishers didn't manufacture such unnecessarily large PC game boxes.

"You're right. I think the CD-ROM market will go the same way as the audio CD market has gone. Now, the CD tall box isn't even tolerated any more, and eventually the same will happen with the current CD-ROM package. Eventually we'll be looking at racks of jewel cases in stores like Electronics Boutique. I'm sure there'll be a lot of resistance from game publishers because that means losing all that shelf-space advertising, but I think the retailers will probably push the issue."

FLUX: If you were a consumer right now being faced with all these choices, what would you be thinking?

"Even though I think that some people will take a wait and see attitude with the new systems, I do feel that a lot of people will make the shift simply because the new games are so much better, and because there's a tremendous amount of peer pressure amongst the kids to have the latest game machine. It would be extremely 'uncool' to have old machines, and that will make a big difference. And **whatever game machine the kids decide as a mass is the coolest is the one that's going to win**—and not necessarily the highest tech or one with the most games. It'll be the one with the coolest games, the coolest ads and the coolest technology."

CAPCOM®

Rich Moore, Director Of Research And Development, Capcom

FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit games will Capcom be producing in 1995?

"It is significantly down this year compared to what it was last year. Domestically, we'll be producing around 5 16-bit titles, and internationally—like in the far east and Europe—we'll be producing about 15 or so 16-bit games."

FLUX: How many 32-bit or PC products?

"We're pushing for about 2 dozen, and that includes Saturn, PlayStation and the PC."

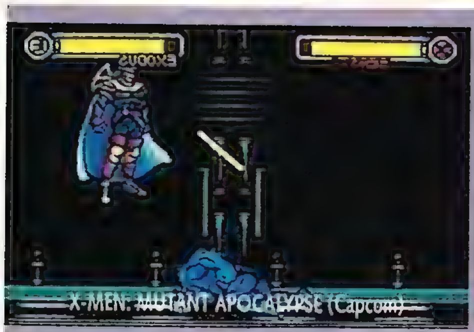
FLUX: Granted, the 16-bit market is dying out—but with an installed base of 30 million systems and no guarantee that people will accept the next generation platforms, why doesn't it make sense to keep producing as many 16-bit titles?

"If you look at it historically, when the SNES replaced the NES and the Genesis replaced the Master System, there were still a number of firms who did good business making games for the older systems. So I think there's still business to be had with the 16-bit games, but the reason so many publishers are going with the 32-bit games is because of the CD format and the fact that the cost of goods is much lower. Plus, in this field, you want to be seen as doing the coolest and cutting-edge types of things, so there's that draw which may be more about perception than business-oriented. Those factors help contribute toward everyone leaning toward the 32-bit systems."

FLUX: How confident is Capcom that American consumers will embrace the new 32-bit machines?

"I think the question is really more 'when' than 'if.' This next year is really going to be a knock-down, slug-out kind of year as the bases are being installed and the possible oversaturation of products. So it'll be a little difficult in the next year and I think there's going to be a pause before people determine which system is going to be the Betamax and which is going to be the VHS. From

THE PUNISHER (Capcom)


X-MEN: MUTANT APOCALYPSE (Capcom)

what we can see, Sega seems to have the name recognition and coolness from the kids—even though the Saturn may not be the more powerful machine—and that makes us think that the Saturn will lead right out of the shoot. A lot of it depends on the price point, but I do believe that both the Saturn and PlayStation will both do better than 3DO did at its launch."

FLUX: If right now is a risky time for game publishers, how does Capcom plan to remain profitable?

"Our solution is to have quite a few 32-bit titles available right off the launch, and to be a leader as those systems roll out. We'll continue to produce a few 16-bit and also those for the PC."

FLUX: What do you think it will take for the 16-bit market to remain viable?

"I think you're going to see a spike in the game rental industry and products like the XBAND that enable you to continue using your 16-bit system without actually buying new software. **The 16-bit market won't just fall off a cliff and disappear**, and some of the A-titles like *Mortal Kombat III* and *Donkey Kong Country 2* will continue to do well on the 16-bit systems. It might take another two or three years before the 16-bit market dies out."

FLUX: If you were a consumer right now being faced with all this 32-bit hype, what would you be thinking?

"I'd certainly be confused. I think the buying decision is going to be lengthened and I think people will really look into what people are saying about the new systems before they go out and buy one. And even though some people will look at the 3DO and Jaguar even more closely now, I do think that the Saturn and PlayStation are the systems to watch."

Playmates

Interactive Entertainment

David Luehmann, Executive Producer, Playmates

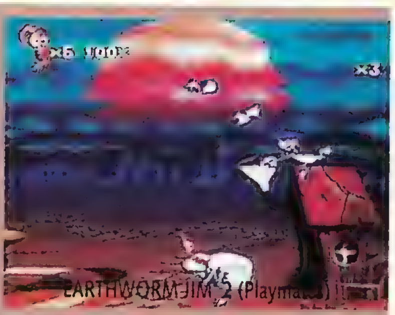
FLUX: Compared to last year, how many 16-bit titles will Playmates be producing in 1995?

"Compared to last year, **the number of 16-bit titles we'll produce is increasing**. Last year was truly our first year in the business. This year, we'll have about five titles, including *Earthworm Jim 2*, *WildC.A.T.S*, *Deep Space Nine* and *Fatal Fury Special*. So we're not walking away from the 16-bit category. We'd like to see the 16-bit market stay strong, but we have some skepticism that it will remain strong."

FLUX: Will Playmates also produce 32-bit games?

"We'll definitely be looking at the 32-bit market. We already have some projects underway."

FLUX: With the 16-bit market waning and the 32-bit market still unsure of itself, where can a third-party game publisher go that's safe?


EARTHWORM JIM 2 (Playmates)

"PC CD-ROM. That seems to be the only stable market out there right now. You just have to keep up with the new technology and always make sure you're planning a year ahead—then you should be okay. **16-bit, however, is very dangerous right now**. Especially with the fact that cartridge costs are so high and the low retail selling point, there's a huge risk overall. If you get stuck with inventory, you're looking at a great potential for loss. So we have one PC CD-ROM in development right now, and we basically plan to release 4 per year."

FLUX: How confident are you that the Saturn, PlayStation and Ultra 64 will be successful?

"I think they will be successful, depending on the price point of the machines. If Sega, Sony and Nintendo can roll out these machines at what the public deems an acceptable retail price, then these machines will be embraced. **I do think the public is ready for a new, exciting machine**."

FLUX: Why do you think the Saturn and PlayStation will make it where 3DO and Jaguar have struggled?

"I think they both suffered from not having the proper software at launch. And the Jaguar has had some nice games of late, but it still suffers partially because of the cost of cartridges and the fact that there isn't a large installed base out there. But the Jaguar still has some potential. And the 3DO has a dozen or so really good titles, and if the price of the machine continues to come down, they still have a chance."

FLUX: What do you think the Earthworm Jim game said about the 16-bit platform?

"Certainly the success we've enjoyed with *Earthworm Jim* has showed that, if you bring a real novel concept to an existing platform, it means that a lot of people will buy it and enjoy it. And when we release *Earthworm Jim 2* later this year, we'll lead on the 16-bit platforms and expect the same phenomenon. The game will be every bit as good as part one with a lot of new features and incredible new graphics. And we've injected a lot of 3-D areas here and there so you get realistic viewpoints."

FLUX: Is there still potential for the 16-bit platforms? Is there still ground to be broken?

"Even now, **the sky's the limit on what you can do with a 16-bit cartridge**, and it's up to the developer and the publisher to bring that vision to the software. There's still potential to do successful 16-bit games, but it is more risky now. There's definitely a percentage of people out there who are not going to buy all new hardware the day it comes out, and those people will still be looking for good 16-bit games—and *Earthworm Jim 2* will be there, ready and waiting for them."

FLUX: If you were a consumer right now being faced with all this 32-bit hype, what would you be thinking?

EARTHWORM JIM 2 (Playmates)

"I thin the whole thing will basically come down to software. Do you like *Toh Shin Den* or *Virtua Fighter*? Whichever one you like more, then buy that machine. If Nintendo can bring home *Killer Instinct* with the Ultra 64 and you like that game, then buy an Ultra. It all comes down to personal favorites."

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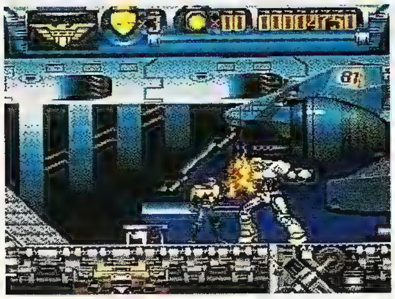
JUDGE DREDD

SYSTEM: Genesis
MANUFACTURER: ACCLAIM
GRAPHIX: B-
CONTROL: B
SOUND: B-
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: B-



It's not as if the video game industry actually *needed* another gun-wielding hero with an attitude, but Judge Dredd—the feature character of the popular British comic book and an upcoming Stallone movie—has finally arrived on the SNES and Genesis.

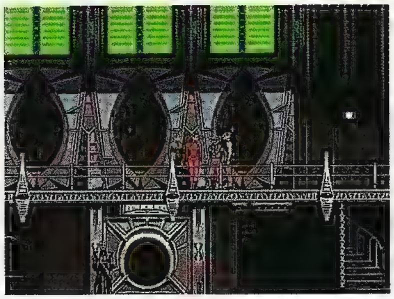
It is the year 2139, and the justice system as we know it no longer exists. Instead, a hybrid mix of policemen and juries, known as Judges, keep the peace. You play as Dredd, a Judge legendary for dispensing justice in a world seething with crime. Early missions such as controlling a prison riot and breaking up a gang war lead into a storyline that finds Dredd framed for murder. Battling through 12 action-packed levels, you must first clear Dredd's name, then bring the real murderers to justice.

Though offering little in the way of ground-breaking gameplay, there are a number of nice elements here. For one, each mission has multiple objectives. In each scenario, a primary objective must be accomplished, but additional points can be racked up for achieving secondary objectives. Another cool feature is Dredd's ability to serve justice in one of two methods. For lesser criminals, you have the option to Arrest or Sentence. On the other hand, Sentencing allows Dredd to really cut loose with an arsenal of firepower that includes Armor-Piercing, Ricochet and Heat Seeker Missiles, as well as his trusty Lawgiver handgun.

On the negative side, the sprites are a bit small and the drab colors take something away from the visual appeal, but these are minor gripes and do not detract much from the game. In a gaming world overpopulated with bad translations of self-indulgent action flicks, *Judge Dredd* stands alone. —ANTHONY LYNCH

DEEP SPACE NINE

SYSTEM: Genesis
MANUFACTURER: Playmates
GRAPHIX: C+
CONTROL: C-
SOUND: C+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: C



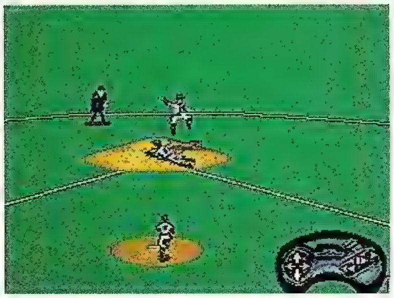
While *Star Trek* has been a worldwide phenomenon in television, film and print for quite a number of years, for some reason that popularity has never carried over to the video game platform. And while *Deep Space Nine* is the newest of the *Star Trek*-based video games, it unfortunately will not be the one to make *Star Trek* a viable 16-bit property.

Fans will enjoy the faithful attention to the show's characters and storyline, as well as a variety of dangerous missions including a high-speed chase through an asteroid field.

Unfortunately, the game suffers from a number of flaws guaranteed to frustrate even the most tolerant gamers. For starters, the gameplay requires the user to solve puzzles through trial and error instead of skill or logic. Relying on blind leaps of faith and facing obstacles that assure the character of taking damage is just as unappealing as it sounds, and the fact that Sisko sprints around the space station like Carl Lewis instead of walking, all contribute to *Deep Space Nine* being a truly unenjoyable gaming experience. —ANTHONY LYNCH

TRIPLE PLAY BASEBALL '96

MANUFACTURER: EA Sports
SYSTEM: Genesis
GRAPHIX: B+
SOUND: B
CONTROL: A-
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A-



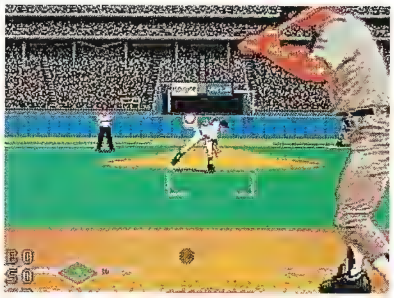
Baseball is one of the few sports EA has struggled with for years, regardless of the platform (*Tony LaRussa*, cough, cough). And while the majority of new baseball carts have been about as much fun as a train wreck, EA's *Triple Play Baseball '96* is actually a sports game worthy of purchase. And so confident is EA in their product that they're touting it as the "*World Series Baseball* Killer"—a dig at Sega's hit franchise title.

What makes *Triple Play* such an enjoyable baseball sim isn't the graphics, the realism or the number of options—it's something not normally found in baseball games, and that's details. Yup, details. Take a second or two to decide what type of pitch you want to throw, and watch as your pitcher spits a big loogie into the grass; see the second baseman leap over a player sliding into second and throw to first for a double play, then watch the sliding player get up and dust himself off; and when the ball is hit, the batter tosses the bat aside and heads to first. Better still, run across the field with the ball, crash into one of your teammates, and see them both tumble over and hit the dirt with a thud. That's right, details. But are minor details like these the criteria for a solid baseball game? No—if the gameplay is good on its own, intricacies such as the aforementioned simply add to the game's overall enjoyment.

As for the actual gameplay, *Triple Play Baseball '96* is about as good as it gets. The game utilizes a similar low, behind-the-batter perspective as its rival, Sega's *World Series*, and the controls (throwing, hitting, catching, etc.) are a breeze to use. There are options aplenty, like choosing from one of 11 different types of pitches (including "bean ball" and "brushback"), selecting the best way to slide or even how hard to throw the ball—in other words, the type of options that actually add to the gameplay (a rarity in sports sims). Pitchers fatigue and start throwing wildly, in which case you must look to the bullpen and find a replacement. Graphically, *Triple Play* is no great achievement, but at least EA has finally made players look like actual people, instead of the short, stocky blocks with legs that are often found in their *NHL* and *Madden* series. Still, their movements—though quite realistic—are jerky enough to hamper the overall feel of the game. And unlike other baseball sims, like Sony's *ESPN* series, *Triple Play* is not a wild homerun derby—the hitting is kept to a minimum, and neither you nor the computer should expect a scoring romp. It all adds up to a fine baseball game. —JEFF KITTS

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL '95

SYSTEM: Genesis
MANUFACTURER: Sega
GRAPHIX: A-
CONTROL: B+
SOUND: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A-



In the year of the strike, the umpire lockout and a shortened season, about the only thing baseball fans had to look forward to was a new update from Sega. *World Series Baseball '95* is the premier home baseball game and actually manages to stir up the adrenaline-pumping emotion found in EA games like *Madden* or *NHL*.

World Series Baseball became popular for its "Catcher's view" of realistic batters and digitized pitchers in beautifully rendered stadiums. From the Green Monster of Fenway to the new Coor's Field, each stadium is captured, giving the game a hearty sense of realism. Equally important is that when the perspective changes from batter's to fielder's view, the nuances of each park remain intact.

The graphics and sound of *WSB* improve on last year's model. Colors appear more vibrant, and the extra frames of animation make the fielders and base runners look like the real deal. Voices can be heard in the game's play by play, stadium announcer, and even the umpires. Unfortunately, vendors are no longer included.

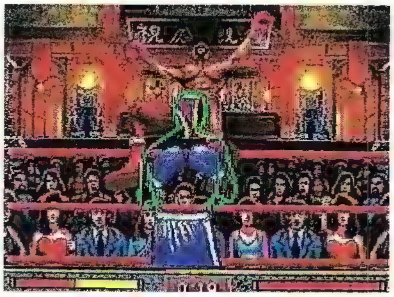
Options allow for season/playoffs mode, a homerun derby, or just suit up for one game, alone or with a friend. Players include all the pro sluggers on their '94 rosters, but with the trade or draft options gamers can create their own teams. All-time greats are also represented, with their stats included.

But despite the overall solid gameplay, there are a few programming glitches you should be aware of: Two out innings, pitchers who never get warmed up, and the ability to tag up prior to the catch.

WSB should be a part of any gamer's collection. Those who dug the first version may wish to update to the crisper graphics and better control. However, the casual gamer may need only one installment. —MATT LURIN

TOUGHMAN CONTEST

SYSTEM: 32X
MANUFACTURER: Electronic Arts
GRAPHIX: A-
CONTROL: A-
SOUND: A-
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A-



Toughman Contest from EA Sports gives Sega owners a chance to play a home version similar to the classic *Punch-Out!!* arcade game (now available for SNES). The game offers many variations on the original theme of a transparent fighter taking on all comers.

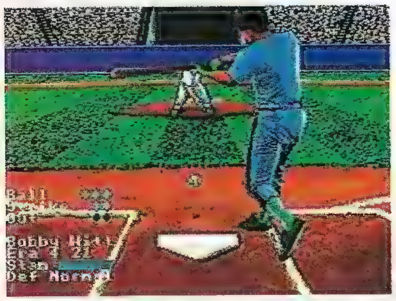
Choose from 24 different fighters from around the globe, compete in regional tournaments, then fly to Vegas for a chance to face Butter Bean himself.

Graphically, *Toughman* is a sight for sore eyes. The backgrounds are more colorful than on the Genesis version, but are still too drab for 32-bit. The character animation, sound and gameplay of *Toughman* are superb. Button/joypad combos allow gamers to mix up a variety of punches, and this game offers the ability to select power punches. Choose from 14 punches, including a windmill wind up, haymaker and a Popeye punch. The game is different from boxing in that it are three short rounds, with a knockout or 3 knockdowns in one round bringing victory. If this does not happen the judges choose the winner based on overall performance.

Toughman Contest for the 32X is a must have, unless of course you already own the Genesis version. —MATT LURIN

RBI BASEBALL '95

SYSTEM: 32X
MANUFACTURER: Time Warner Interactive
GRAPHIX: B-
SOUND: C
CONTROL: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: B-



Baseball's back. Whee. The greedy bastards that own the teams and the greedy bastards that play on them have settled their greedy differences. That means baseball's back on the game platforms, too. Again, whee. At least, that's the feeling of unbridled enthusiasm that *RBI Baseball '95* for the 32X evokes. It's an improvement for the *RBI* series, but not enough of a leap to warrant a 32-bit game.

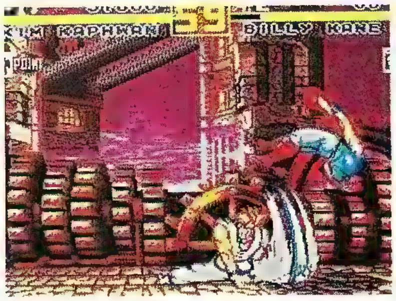
With the MLBPA license firmly in tact, *RBI '95* gives players a slew of pro options, from a home run derby to a full 162-game season to a number of "Game Breakers"—crucial strategy situations or desperate last-ditch efforts that you've got to slug, steal or slide your way out of. But even with all the fancy options, *RBI* is still an arcade-style baseball game; control is stupid-easy, the outfielders move as one and the accent here is on hitting and catching, not strategy or simulation.

The graphics are okay; the batter's sprite is huge, but he's rather choppily animated. The fielders, on the other hand, are slick, but too small. I thought 32-bit gaming was going to let us have the both size *and* smoothness...and maybe it will, when it arrives for real. And for some reason, TWI still thinks that full-motion video is cool; they've thrown some small black and white movie clips in with the action that neither enhance the game nor entertain the gamer. The sounds are a cut above the usual *RBI* fare, with lots of music—which is hideous, and thankfully can be turned off—and umpire calls and commentary—which aren't hideous, but aren't exactly CD-quality, either. Compared to other 32X games, the audio's about average.

RBI Baseball '95 doesn't exactly *suck*—it's one of those games that would be fine as a 16-bit cart, but with the heightened expectations of 32-bit gaming, it simply falls flat. If we don't start seeing some software that shows the 32X's supposed muscle, *I'm* going on strike. —DAN AMRICH

FATAL FURY SPECIAL

SYSTEM: SNES
MANUFACTURER: Takara
GRAPHIX: A-
SOUND: B
CONTROL: A-
PASSWORD/SAVE: No
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: B-



The latest effort from the SNK/Takara Fighting Factory is *Fatal Fury Special*, a massive 32-meg adaptation of the arcade hit. If you're still interested in *Street Fighter*-style brawling on your SNES in the Virtua age, *FFS* is worth a look.

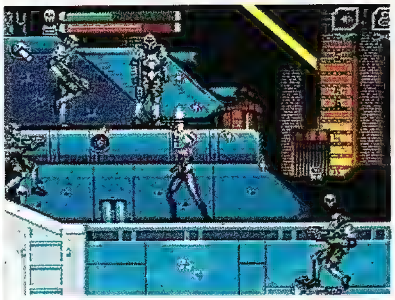
What's so special about *Fatal Fury Special*? In addition to the large cast of characters from the previous *Fatal Fury* games (Geese Howard, Axel Hawk, Duck King...what's with the birds?), it's the 3-D angle to the brawling. In addition to the standard 2-D side-by-side action, fighters can shift between a front plane and a back plane. Stuck in the corner? Just jump to the side and the safety of the other plane. You can also attack between the two planes by pressing the L button in addition to your standard punch or kick. It's a nifty option that, while not 3-D in the current fighting game definition of the term, makes the same old same-old fighter a little more interesting. There are a few other new options, too, such as playable bosses and a guest appearance by Ryo Sakazaki (but you only get to see him if you *really* kick ass).

The game's 32-meg looks seem to have been spent mostly on graphics; the character sprites are respectably large, and each stage boasts colorful animated backgrounds. The music's fine too, but the sound effects are all either muffled or overly-processed with effects, or both. *FFS'* controls prove tight, responsive and not overly complex. A scan of the manual is all you'll need to start bustin' heads.

The world may not have really *needed* one more side-by-side fighting game, but at least *Fatal Fury Special* isn't a bad one. It's a fine arcade translation, and fans of the *FF* series will dig it. —DAN AMRICH

PHANTOM 2040

SYSTEM: SNES
MANUFACTURER: Viacom New Media
GRAPHIX: B
CONTROL: C+
SOUND: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: B-



What the world needs is a really good comic-based video game that's not just another run-n-jump-n-shoot-fest. Unfortunately, *Phantom 2040* ain't it. You've seen this game before. As a matter of fact, if *Phantom* was a character in *X-Men*, you'd swear you were playing *X-Men 2: The Clone Wars*.

The only improvements *Phantom* makes over that title are due to the machine. The SNES simply has better processors and the graphics are well-executed. Granted, they're nothing you haven't seen before, but they do justice to the original *Phantom* artwork. The animation is a little uninspired, though. *Phantom* ends up walking like Old Weird Harold from *Fat Albert*. As for the sound, the music is good-but-typical and we all know how satisfying those punchy SNES "Fist-hitting-jaw" sounds are. Technically, it's a good title. creatively may be another story.

You are Kit Walker, AKA the *Phantom*, 24th in a father-to-son line tracing back to Africa (wait a minute! isn't the *Phantom* a white guy? Oh well, anyway...) Your mission is to stop the evil Rebecca Madison, head of Maximum Inc. and the latest in the long history of the Madison clan to crave ultimate control of the world.

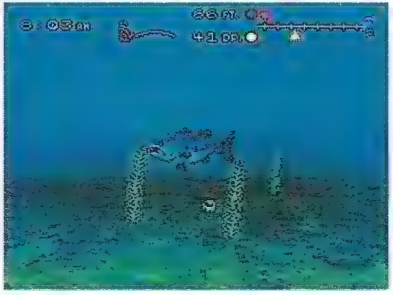
The levels are huge, both horizontally and vertically, making it a necessity to master the use of your trusty grappling hook-like "Inductance Rope." This brings me to my one big beef with *Phantom 2040*: The controls are too damn hard! You could sit there for five minutes trying to get your rope throwing maneuvers just right to clear a little box that's in your way. Let's just say my ASCIIPad turbo controller is the only thing that made this review possible. Viacom certainly hasn't lived up to the precedent that they set with their PC games like MTV's *Club Dead*. This one is merely a rehash of things we've seen plenty of time before, although maybe worth a one-day rental. —MARK EAST

BASS MASTERS CLASSIC

MANUFACTURER: T•HQ
SYSTEM: SNES
GRAPHIX: C
SOUND: C+
CONTROL: B
PASSWORD/SAVE: No
BUY/RENT: Rent
OVERALL: C-

Televised fishing could very well be the most boring thing on earth. At least I thought it was until I popped *Bass Masters Classic* into my SNES deck, because at that point I realized that I would much rather have spent time watching some redneck haul in a 5-inch trout on ESPN than playing this stinky fish of a game.

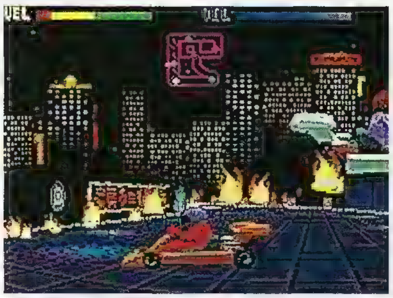
Imagine a scenario like this being generated from a $65 cartridge: First, you select your "angler" (one of those cute fishing terms), the character you wish to play as. Upon entering the first in a series of four local, state and regional bass fishing tournaments (which all lead to the big one, The Classic—oh, boy), you hit the bait & tackle shop and stock up on lures, rods, reels, fishing line and whatever other items you'll need on your exciting quest for seafood. Get yer motor runnin' and head out on the...*lake*, where you search for a good place to fish. Once there, select a spot where you think the fish'll be bitin' and cast out. As your lure plunks into the water and sinks to the bottom, the only thing you can really do is wait. And wait. And wait some more. Until—gasp!—a little fishy swims right past your lure! What to do? You start jiggling that lure around in the deep blue, pulling it back and forth, until finally that scaly sucker goes for it and gets a hook through the lip. Nailed! And then you have to reel him in...slowly...and bring him on board. At the end of the day, you bring your boatload of guppies in and have them weighed to determine your ranking. Oh, but don't dare come in late, or you'll be penalized!!



Bored yet? Good—you've got a firm grasp of what video game fishing is like. Graphically, the game's a snooze. The underwater scenes are bland as hell—water, water everywhere. It's not that *Bass Masters Classic* is a particularly bad fishing game—in fact, it's probably about as good as fishing on the Super Nintendo can get. The question is, who needs it? Perhaps those looking for a quiet, gentle type of 16-bit contest—those who just can't handle the manic pace of say, *The Lion King*—will find solace in *Bass Masters Classic*. Me, I'd rather watch some hick in a baseball hat haul in a 3-pound boot on TV.
—ALEX RICO

SUPERKARTS

MANUFACTURER: Williams
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
GRAPHIX: B+
SOUND: B
CONTROL: B-
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW: Buy
OVERALL: B+



For auto racing fans looking for something a little different, Williams' new *SuperKarts* PC CD-ROM may be just what the doctor ordered—this is computer go-kart racing at its finest. And while the concept of zipping around a slippery, curvy track in a go-kart may not sound like much, the truth is that *SuperKarts* grows on you. It's not complicated, overly difficult or requires anything more than some basic driving savvy—but it's the type of simplistic thrill we used to get from such classic games as *Pole Position* or *Turbo*, and that alone is worth it.

From the options screen, you can choose to play a half season, full season or go straight to arcade mode for some quick rubber burnin' action. You can race anywhere from two to 40 laps and choose from eight different drivers (each representing a country). From there, it's racin' time. Each of the game's numerous tracks are long, winding and fully explorable, meaning you can drive anywhere you wish, even backwards against the flow of traffic. Powerups including cash (which you use to upgrade your kart) and extra turbo boosts are strewn about the track for the taking. Break through certain points in the wall and uncover secret areas containing powerups. Pit stops can be made to repair car damage and refuel, and you can change your view at any point dur-

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Mystery Word Grid

	H				___
		E			___
P	O	W	E	R	N
	R				___
S					___

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

POWER ....N	PRESS ....K	BLAST ......A	WRECK .....P
BREAK ......Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY ....E	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND .....H	PRESS C	DREAM I
CRUSH .....O	SCORE ......R	SLANT L	CHASE ......P

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ing the race. Think of *SuperKarts* as a cross between *DOOM*, *Rock And Roll Racing* and *Virtua Racing*.

The graphics are nice, with each track having a specific layout, look and feel that often correspond to the appropriate country (see the Taj Mahal on the India track). Each track offers a host of obstacles, including water, sand and ice, and some even plunge you into the darkness of night racing. But always remember that *SuperKarts* is not about realism—there are no crashes here and the game is more like bumper cars than auto racing. But that's okay—it keeps the action fast and the game enjoyable. What more do you want? —JEFF KITTS

ROAD RASH

MANUFACTURER: Electronic Arts
SYSTEM: Sega CD
GRAPHIX: B+
SOUND: A-
CONTROL: A
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: B

Road Rash, now in its sixth incarnation (three Genesis, one Game Gear and one 3DO), has over the years become a veritable institution of racing games. But it seems as though this staple of asphalt action reached its peak last year with the brilliant 3DO version, and is no beginning to lose some of its thrust. Take the new Sega CD version: With it, the folks at EA have done absolutely nothing new with their super-successful title, but have instead taken the basic elements of *Road Rash II* (Genesis), combined it with the 3DO's tracks and options and mixed in a little useless full motion video. And there you have it—instant *Road Rash* for the Sega CD.

Like its 3DO counterpart, *Road Rash* lets you select from five different tracks: from the tip of the Sierra Nevada, the hills of the Pacific Highway and even through congested city streets. But don't get excited—these tracks are devoid of any personality and are no different from those in the Genesis versions, they just have the 3DO's track names. With each of the game's five skill levels, track length increases.

Winning earns cash, and from there you can enter the bike shop and buy some truly ferocious crotch-rockets—then you're ready to race with the big boys. But be prepared to spend a lot of time sidding along the road, as the game's mean machines acan be difficult to control. And those who know the beauty of rashing understand the need for weapons—that's right, weapons!—and *Road Rash* for the Sega CD offers the same arsenal as in *Road Rash II* (a club, your fists and a steel chain). The least EA could have done was added a few new weapons to the fray, but not so.

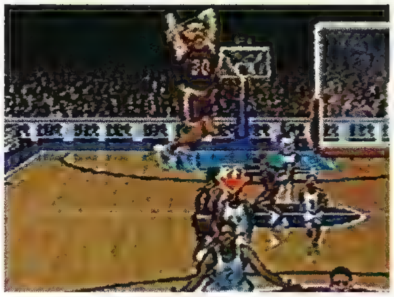
Perhaps the only advantage the Sega CD version offers over its 3DO counterpart is the fact that the music—actual tracks from Soundgarden, Monster Magnet and Paw, among other A&M Records artists—actually plays during the race (and anything is better than standard, repetitive video game muzak). Plus, you can even take a seat at the mixing board and remix the volume levels of the music, sound effects and engine volume. It's not much, but it's a neat option.

The graphics are decent, if not any better than what's found in the Genesis versions of the game, and the full motion video (bikers revving their machines while crowds of collegiate idiots hoot and holler around them) does nothing to help the situation.

If you already own *Road Rash II* or 3 (and 3DO rashers can take comfort in knowing that they own the most dazzling racing game on any dedicated game system), this CD version is nothing you haven't seen before. But if you still have yet to experience the manic thrill of speeding down the road at 150+ m.p.h. while trying to whip a steel chain around the necks of your opponents, the Sega CD version of *Road Rash* is the way to go. —JEFF KITTS

SLAM 'N JAM '95

SYSTEM: 3DO
MANUFACTURER: Crystal Dynamics
GRAPHIX: A-
CONTROL: A
SOUND: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A



A basketball quiz: What do you get when you cross Konami's arcade hit *Run & Gun* with 3DO developers Crystal Dynamics? Um...a Crystal Dynamics clone of *Run & Gun*? Yep, that's really what CryDy's new *Slam 'N Jam '95* is—but who cares? The 3DO platform desperately needed a decent basketball game (thank you, *Jammit*, you can leave now) and *Slam 'N Jam* packs a powerful blend of arcade-style sports action and 32-bit eye candy. And don't let the game's obvious inspiration bother you; in a lot of ways, *Slam 'N Jam* puts *Run & Gun* to shame.

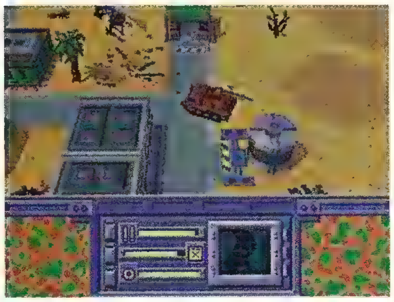
A refreshing break from the recent onslaught of 2-on-2 side-scrolling carts, *Slam 'N Jam '95* gives gamers a full five-player team to control (with a complete bench to sub in) and a basket-to-basket, vertical-scrolling view. Wherever the ball is, the camera follows; the 3DO handles the scaling and zooming with ease, keeping the action front and center. Behind-the-back passes, alley-oops, high-flyin' *realistic* dunks—there's more than enough jazz here to jam with. Plus, the game offers full season mode, playoffs, fatigue and all those other realistic options sim freaks get gooey over.

Whereas other b-ball titles like to see how small they can make their sprites, *Slam 'N Jam*'s monstrous players lumber across the screen—and amazingly, the court visibility remains great. The detailed dunks are delightful—one-handed jams, 360-degree spins, and the occasional shattered backboard. Want to rub in your dunk with a little rim-hanging? Grab that sucker on your way down and watch the whole backboard sway. All the controls are easy and instinctive; even the most impressive court moves can be pulled off without much practice.

It's a pity that there aren't real NBA teams and logos ("real" players are in the game, but not on their proper teams—look for clones of Shaq & the Magic playing in New Jersey and LJ & Zo dunking for Chicago), but gameplay is ultimately more important than pro basketball's seal of approval. And with smooth, addictive action like this, even mild b-ball fans will be playing *Slam 'N Jam '95* til they drop. —BRIAN CARNEGIE

RETURN FIRE

SYSTEM: 3DO
MANUFACTURER: Prolific
GRAPHIX: B+
CONTROL: B
SOUND: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A-



"Destroy! Destroy! Destroy!" reads the tag line on the back of the *Return Fire* box. What could be a better enticement? But rest assured, this is no hype. As military shooters go, *Return Fire* is one of the most violent, explosion-filled firefights to ever hit a home gaming system, and a welcome first for the 3DO.

The goal in *Return Fire* is simple: roam across heavily-armored desert wastelands in search of the enemy's flag. Capture the flag and return to base. Simple, but not easy. On your quest, the mode of transportation you choose (helicopter, jeep or one of two types of tank) will be assaulted on all sides, from ground, water and air, resulting in a vicious and frantic exchange of fire from the moment your mission begins.

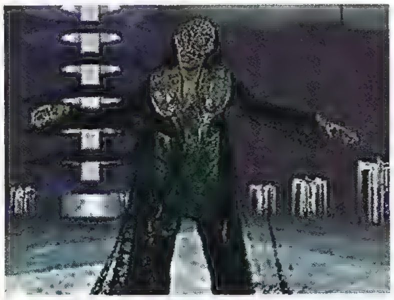
The graphics in *Return Fire* are top notch. With awesome detail right down to the smallest rocks and trees, explosions that send bits and pieces of enemy planes and gun turrets flying and sounds that'll rock your television, *Return Fire* is a visual and sonic joy.

Possibly the coolest aspect of *Return Fire* is the sick and twisted sense of reality the game employs. Run over a small tent with your tank and you'll hear a blood-curdling "squish"-sound as the tent flattens into a red splotch on the desert sand. You can even mow down troops of little enemy men as they run from a building about to explode—or blast 'em out of the water as they try to swim to safety. Awesome.

Return Fire is also a blast to play in two-player mode. Using the split-screen technique, you and a buddy can go on a search-and-destroy mission against each other. Either way, this game is a must-have for those who dig military shooters with lots o' violence. —JEFF KITTS

IMMERCENARY

SYSTEM: 3DO
MANUFACTURER: Electronic Arts
GRAPHIX: B+
CONTROL: B+
SOUND: A-
PASSWORD/SAVE Yes
BUY/RENT: Buy
OVERALL: A-



For quite a while now, 3DOwners have been asking, "When, oh when, God, will there be a *DOOM*-style game for this box I dropped half a grand on?!" Well, guys, your prayers have been answered—and answered well. *Immercenary* is a meat-and-potatoes 3D battle game that's dripping with concept.

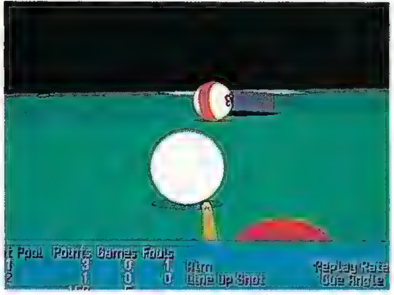
First of all, one of the drawbacks of this unimaginably popular *DOOM*-clone game is that if you were fighting mutants in a dungeon, they wouldn't become piles of blown out pixels the closer you got to them. We just don't have the technology yet to make a truly photo-realistic 3D experience. But the games are fun, so why not make them a little more believable? The boys at Five Miles Out, an upstart game company, have done just that by setting the action in a virtual combat world known as "Perfect." Here, it doesn't matter that your opponents are pixelated. They're supposed to be. Using a multitude of different weapons and power-ups, you run around a vast playfield blowing away anything that moves. As your DOA (Defense, Offense, Agility) levels become depleted, you must return to DOAsys to heal and chat with other "rithms." It is here that you unravel the story behind "Perfect" and your ultimate mission. There are ten bosses that you must face to advance, each with his own unique capabilities and battle techniques. Once you defeat them all and attain #2 status, you must battle the top dog, "Perfect 1." Crash his algorithm and you overthrow the throne, gaining the ability to free your fellow virtual warriors from their long imprisonment.

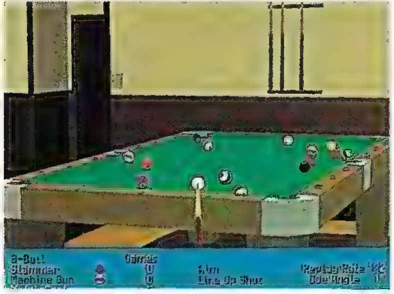
The game play is quite fast, the control quick and responsive and the sound, of course, mind-blowing. The full-motion interludes are even well done—if you don't mind watching non-actors read cue cards. *Immercenary* is one of those games that you'll put down for a while and go back to after the sweaty nightmares stop. It's epic-long, hard, and nearly impossible to conquer. The wait is over, 3DOwner's. Jack in and go to work. —MARK EAST

VIRTUAL POOL

SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
MANUFACTURER: Celeris/Interplay
GRAPHICS: B+
CONTROL: B
SOUND: B
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW: Buy
OVERALL: A

Finally, pool for the PC done the right way. *Virtual Pool* has the most accurate presentation and physics to date for a PC pool game, and why not—they only had those physics designed by a company that used to do submarine tracking software for the military—not too shabby, huh? *Virtual Pool* treats both the pool table and the balls as true 3-D objects to be rotated around and viewed from any angle the player chooses and from any distance, and serves not only as a game in its own right but as a tool for actually improving one's real-world pool skills. Features include variations on game play (8-Ball, 9-Ball, Straight Pool, Snooker, etc.), a trick shot library, a supercool projected-course option showing the ultimate path for every single ball affected during a shot, full-motion video segments spotlighting pool master Lou "Machine-Gun" Butera, and, best of all, dead-on motion allowing for realistic curved paths and simultaneous collisions at 30-60 frames per second. If you have any interest in pool-related video games, *Virtual Pool* is the way to go. —CHRIS HUDAK





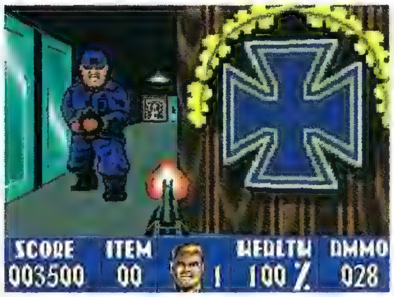
MARATHON

SYSTEM: Macintosh
MANUFACTURER: Bungie Software
GRAPHICS: A
CONTROL: A
SOUND: B
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW: Buy
OVERALL: A

Another first-person corridor-crawler on the market....and God help me, I can't stop playing it. *Marathon* one-ups just about every *DOOM*-style game out there: First of all, it's truly 3-D, giving players the ability to selectively look and shoot (and lurk) above and below the standard field of view, which makes for extreme paranoia in the one-player game and absolute, trigger-pumping insanity in multi-player games; second, the game's enemy-intelligence engine actually seems to work; third, the story elements are top-notch, among which are the ramblings and rantings of a half-cracked Artificial Intelligence which may be in cahoots with the invading things roaming the dark halls. —CHRIS HUDAK

WOLFENSTEIN 3-D

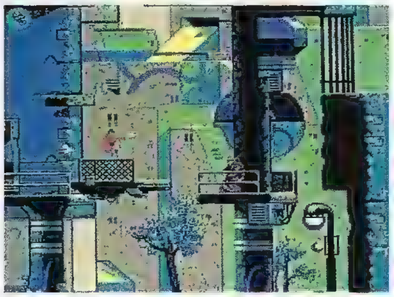
SYSTEM: Macintosh
MANUFACTURER: MacPlay
GRAPHICS: B
CONTROL: B
SOUND: C+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW: Borrow
OVERALL: C+



Wolfenstein 3D, the predecessor to *DOOM* and one of the original first-person bloodbaths, has finally arrived for the Macintosh. And it's not a bad translation of the PC classic—it's just not all that good, either. Trapped in the depths of the Nazi POW camp Castle Wolfenstein, you must kill your way out of 90 levels filled with guards, killer dogs, SS troops, twisted Nazi doctors and even more twisted Nazi genetic experiments—a very grotesque yet cool touch, if you think about it long enough—and, of course, Hitler himself (usually found in portraits along the walls). Along the way, collect medkits, SS officer's meals, bigger and better weapons, dog food (no kidding) and the ill-gotten Nazi booty of stolen religious artifacts secreted throughout the castle. *Wolfenstein 3D* is *DOOM* with Swastikas, and for those who just can't wait any more for *DOOM* to come to the Mac (should be any day now), *Wolfenstein* is the next best thing.
—CHRIS HUDAK

FLASHBACK

SYSTEM: Macintosh
MANUFACTURER: Delphine/MacPlay
GRAPHICS: A
CONTROL: B-
SOUND: B
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW: Buy
OVERALL: B



Don't let the manual's painfully cheesoid comic-book intro and eye-killing typesetting turn you off—*Flashback* utilizes the same sort of smooth rotoscoped animation, intriguing gameplay and cinema-style story sequences which made its predecessor *Out Of This World* a hit for the Mac. Players assume the role of a beleaguered Galactic Bureau of Investigation agent through one entertainingly complex plot and seven strange levels, including a jungle planet, a futuristic New Washington, a lethal *Running Man*-style game show, and more. There's at least a good forty-hour work week's worth of gameplay here, as well as one of the year's most satisfying sprite action options, the "full-roundhouse-pistol-whip." Unplug the phone and go to it.
—CHRIS HUDAK

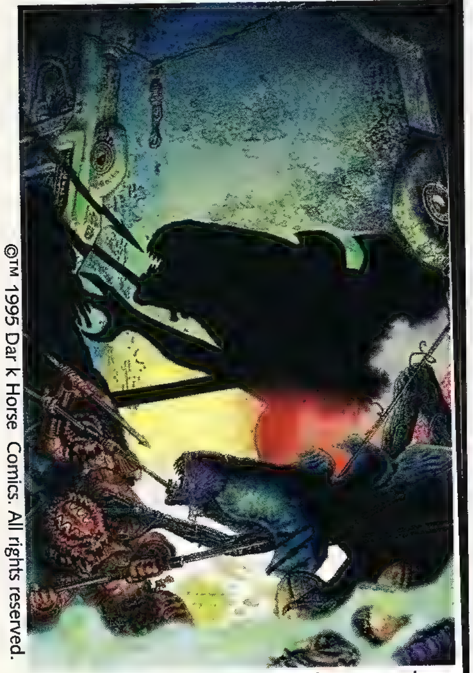
comicbookreviews

all reviews by chris golden

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: WAR #0 & #1

Dark Horse
Written by Randy Stradley, penciled by Warner & Manley, inked by Sinclair & Villagran

This sequel features Machiko Naguchi, the human survivor of the original *AvP* miniseries. While the 'human' element doesn't really come into play until issue one—that is, when the base/planet/ship becomes infested by aliens—it really doesn't matter because the coolest thing about this series is what happens inside the Predator ship. Machiko has joined the Predators—she's one of their clan, the runt, and she'll do whatever is necessary to survive. Given the magnitude and sheer excitement of this story, not to mention the original *AvP* series, Fox would be insane not to make them into feature-length movies. Without a doubt, the best Dark Horse *Predator* story ever.



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RATING: 9

THE BIG BOOK OF CONSPIRACIES

DC/Paradox
Written by Dough Moench
illustrated by various

Oliver Stone meets *The X-Files* in this funky 'factoid book' from Paradox Press. UFO coverups, Jack the Ripper, the CIA, the Holy Grail and much, much more come into play as we jump from one paranoid delusion/reality to another. Who can say what really happened? All we know is that the official story is crap. You'll definitely come out of this one looking over your shoulder while second guessing your history lessons enough to become any teacher's biggest pain in the ass.

RATING: 7

CURSE OF RUNE #1

Malibu/Ultraverse
Written by Chris Ulm
illustrated by Kyle Hotz

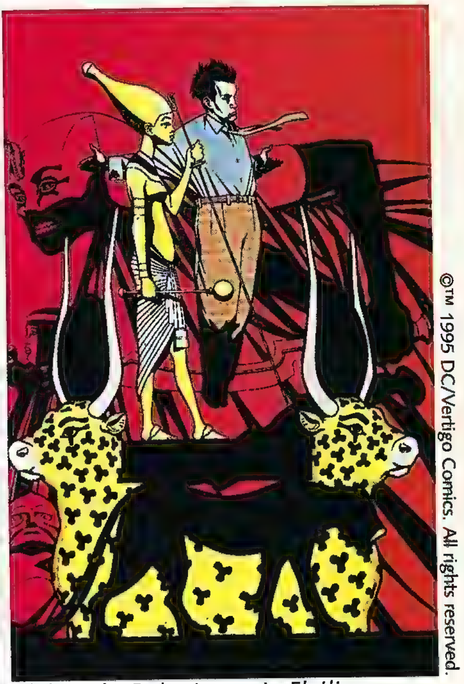
While the *Silver Surfer/Rune* flipbook left a lot to be desired in both story and art, this new series has more than a few good qualities. First off, Rune has Adam Warlock's soul gem, which has turned out to be a sentient creature in its own right. Secondly, old characters like Gemini finally seem on the verge of fulfilling their potential and new ones, like bad girl Shuriken, are primed for takeoff. But most importantly, two words: Kyle Hotz. Ever since his debut, this unique artist has deserved far more attention than he's received. Hopefully, this series will change that.

RATING: 8

EGYPT #1

DC/Vertigo
Written by Peter Milligan
illustrated by Glyn Dillon

The basic concept of this series smacks of the Julia Roberts movie *Flatliners*. That's not really a compliment. On the other hand, when you throw in the news that it's by Peter Milligan, a downright bizarre writer, and Glyn Dillon, a relative newcomer but the brother of *Preacher*'s Steve Dillon, expectations rise. When four bored college students perform an Egyptian death ritual on a junkie loser named Vincent, he is thrust back in time to ancient Egypt, only the beginning of a journey through time and space. It's entertaining insanity, just what we've come to expect from Vertigo.



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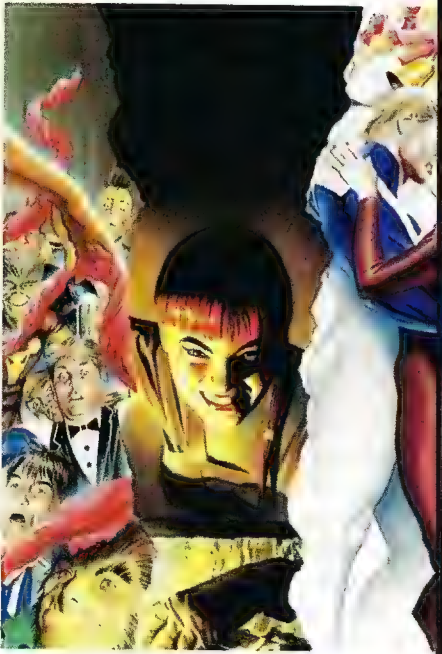
RATING: 7.5

ELEMENTALS: GHOST OF A CHANCE

Comico

Written by Bill Willingham
penciled by Tony Akins, by Neil Trais

For the most part, this one-shot graphic novel is another winner from the new Comico. It's packed with plotlines, overflowing with characters, humor and sex. Lots of sex. But then, you'd expect that from the guy who did Eros Comics' *Ironwood*. The problem, however, is that despite the participation of Willingham, who created *The Elementals* in the first place, it just doesn't stand up to the original series. Maybe it's just resistance to change, but it's hard not to think this story would have been better served without the Elementals, concentrating on Comico's other super team, Strike Force America, for example. Pretty much the same story could have been used. Then again, I don't suppose we're ever going to see the old Elementals again. Get used to it.



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RATING: 6

ELIMINATOR #1

Malibu/Ultraverse
Written by Kanalz & Mann, penciled by Mike Zeck, inked by Denis Rodler

This book presents somewhat of a problem. Zeck's art is typically good, the storyline is jam-packed with subplots, dramatic moments, action...a little of everything. It's got a scary villain, a cool supporting cast including Siren, another Ultraverse bad girl, and a really painful reverse of the metal-ball-out-of-the-nose scene from Schwarzenegger's *Total Recall*. The big problem, and a big problem it could turn out to be if they don't do something about it, is that the title character, Eliminator, is pretty much lifeless. Sure, he seems like a regular guy, and that's a nice change of pace, but we need some real dramatic motivation, fast.

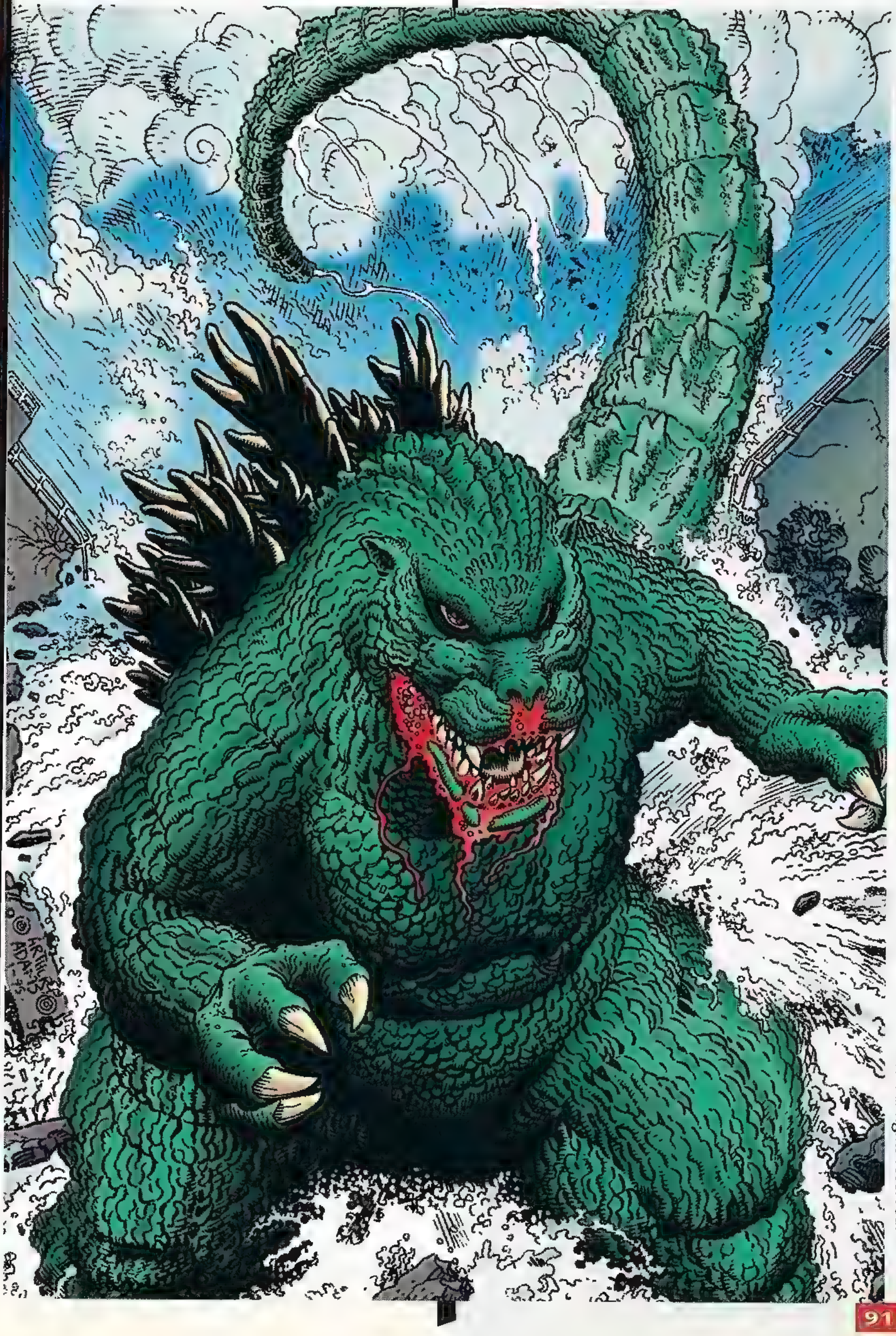
RATING: 5.5

GODZILLA #1

Dark Horse
Written by Kevin Maguire
penciled by Brandon McKinney, inked by Keith Aiken

First things first. This Brandon McKinney dude does a great Godzilla. Without that, it wouldn't matter how good or how much fun this book is. And luckily, it's both. Here's the scenario: America is scrambling. For the first time, the King Of All Monsters is coming ashore in the U.S.! Central to the story are the G-Force, a group of scientists dedicated, apparently, to the study, tracking, and eventual capture of the mighty prehistoric behemoth Godzilla. The humor we're familar with from Maguire's work on *Justice League* and other titles fits in well here, especially in light of the inherent goofiness of some of the Japanese giant monster movie concepts—like Cybersaur, a Nineties version of the mechanical MechaGodzilla. Let's hope that big-budget movie they've been talking about—rumored to be in major trouble and costing as much as $100 million!—actually sees the light of day.

RATING: 8



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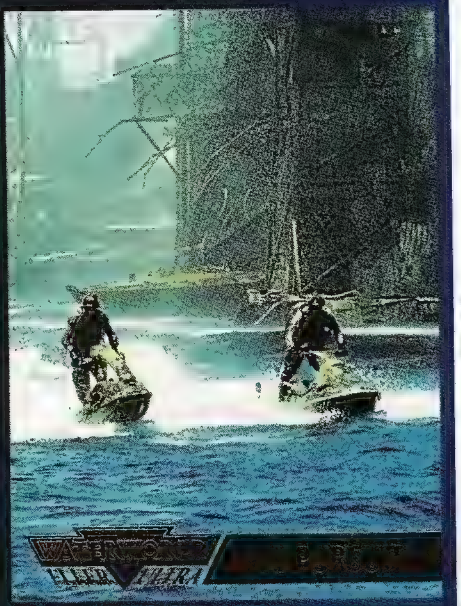


stax

trading card news & notes

by Steve Fritz

- With *Batman Forever* looking to be this summer's hottest ticket, Fleer plans to go along for the ride with two different card sets. First up is the standard 150-card Ultra set with all the highlights and lowlifes of the movie. The other is Fleer's second set of Metal cards, a 150-card set that will feature some of DC's finest artists.
- Babewatchers should look out for Comic Images' *Heavy Metal* card set. This 90-card set will feature art from such notables as Richard Corben, Royo, Simon Bisley and buff babe artists Julie Bell and Olivia.
- While the upcoming *Waterworld* movie may turn out to be one of the most expensive disasters in box office history, the card set from Fleer looks to have all the right elements. The 150-card set, coming in July, offers scenes from the Kevin Costner film and three types of limited edition chase cards: six different Double Foil cards with different color foil treatments for each car, six different Prismatic Foil cards and six different Holograms.
- SkyBox plans to issue two *Star Trek* card sets this month. The first summarizes *The Next Generation*'s second season, and the second focuses on the pilot episode of *Voyager*. The 102-card set not only gives you the casting call and episode highlights, but some of the background info on the making of the new *Trek* series.

HUNTER'S HEART #1

DC/Paradox

Written and illustrated by Randy DuBurke

Like *La Pacifica*, a previous release from Paradox Mystery, *Hunter's Heart* #1 is comic book noir at its best. The gritty art confirms the feeling of degradation and imminent danger that oozes from every page. It's a sleazy city conspiracy with dirty politicians and jilted lovers—a cops vs. serial killer story you've no doubt seen done a million times, but not like this.

RATING: 8.5

NEIL GAIMAN'S LADY JUSTICE #1

TeknoComix

Written by C.J. Henderson, penciled by Michael Netzer, inked by Rick Magyar

It is truly unfortunate that the creators of the individual Tekno titles do not write their own books, especially in the case of Neil Gaiman. However, that disappointment aside, *Lady Justice* is a very worthwhile read. The art team is quite accomplished, and the basic idea has the kind of mythological sense that has made Gaiman so popular. When a woman has been terribly wronged by society, or by individuals, but it seems that the search for justice has reached a dead end, that woman becomes possessed by the personification of justice itself, a blind woman with bloody vengeance on her mind. It's good stuff, no question. Still, there is a nagging suspicion that another writer might more fully realize the potential of Gaiman's concept.

RATING: 7

MICKEY SPILLANE'S MIKE DANGER #1

TeknoComix

Written by Max Allan Collins, pencilled by Eduardo Barreto and inked by Steve Leialoha

Wow. With Frank Miller on the cover, you have rather high expectations about what's inside. And you won't be disappointed. Spillane is an American icon, the creator of Mike Hammer, for one. As a writer, he is virtually synonymous with hard-boiled detective stories, and was a great influence on Miller's own *Sin City*. Here, with Mike Danger, the creative team has taken Spillane a few steps farther. On a tip from a friend, Danger investigates a man suspected of being a Nazi war criminal, gets cryogenically frozen, and wakes up in the year 2052. It's a new twist on a classic sci-fi story, and worth every penny.

RATING: 9

JOHN JAKES' MULKON EMPIRE #1

TeknoComix

Written by Kate Worley, illustrated by John Watkiss

When you think John Jakes, you think of 50-hour TV miniseries about women in billowing dresses and gun-totin' soldiers. You don't think science fiction, especially not comic books. That aside, this sci-fi melodrama makes great reading. Yeah, it's a family saga, covering the many generations of a huge corporate dynasty, but it's also packed with interstellar espionage and star battles you can't help but enjoy. Kate Worley's writing is top notch, clear and concise. Unfortunately, the art by John Watkiss is a little too cluttered with supposedly high-tech architecture, which ultimately proves distracting.

RATING: 7.5

NECROMANTRA #2

Malibu/Ultraverse

Written by Mike W. Barr, penciled by Gabriel Gecko, inked by Stephen Baskerville

All around, the Ultraverse line has been improving dramatically, especially in the art department. Gecko is good. Very good. This story is a refreshing break from the regular Ultraverse titles because rather than take place on Earth, it's set in a magical kingdom which is Necromantra's new home. Another plus is that it is always interesting to see villains in the spotlight rather than the heroes. In her 'human' guise, Necromantra is pure mega-bitch, and in costume, she creates war because it gets her off! The fact that this is the flipside of the *Lord Pumpkin* miniseries is an added bonus.

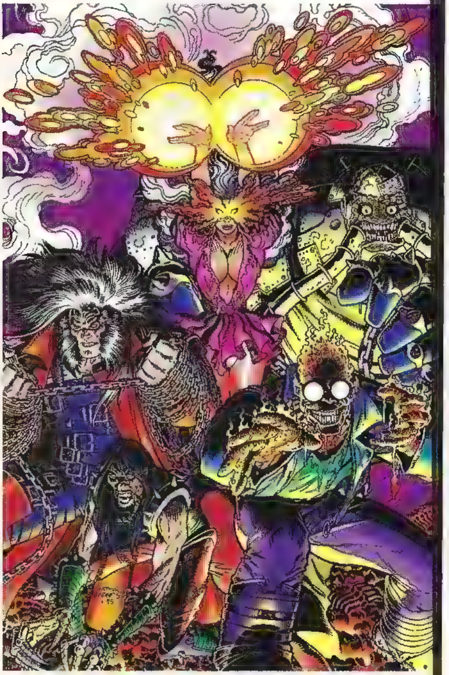
RATING: 7

OBLIVION #1-#3

Comico

Written by Jack Herman, penciled by Andy Dimitt, inked by Neil Trais

Comico Comics may have published a lot of really crappy stuff during their final days, but this series rocks! It's packed with intrigue, dozens of characters, and subplots galore, not to mention incredible babes and buckets of gore. It's heaven vs. hell, but our heroes are from hell! And hell is a planet called Oblivion. Lord Saker, from the original *Elementals* series, has staged a hostile takeover of Oblivion, and now he's trying to take over the rest of the universe as well, starting with a little meeting right here on Earth. Most comics with balls are also unfortunately pretty awful packages. This is slick, badass publishing.



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RATING: 10

PRIME #24

Malibu/Ultraverse

Written by Strazewski & Jones, penciled by John Statema, inked by Keith Aiken

At worst, *Prime* is a harmless superhero book. At best, however, as in this issue, it is the kind of superhero book other companies are struggling to remember how to produce. #24 is not only a hell of a lot of fun, but boasts a terrific story. Kevin Green finally comes clean with his mother, coming out of the closet and admitting that he is Prime. The flip side of this is that Turbocharge, the kid who thinks he's Prime's sidekick, literally comes out of the closet when he admits to his father that he's gay. Add to that the suspense as we begin to close in on the true origins of Prime, and you've got one solid book with more maturity than most superhero comics.

RATING: 8.5

RUINS #1

Marvel

Written by Warren Ellis, illustrated by Cliff & Terese Neilsen

The first major book in Marvel's new 'Alterniverse' line (think Elseworlds). Warren Ellis has taken Marvel by storm in the past year. This is unquestionably the sickest, most demented vision the Marvel universe has ever seen. Imagine this: on a rainy sidewalk, Sheldon is confronted by an absolutely berzer Nick Fury. They are approached by a redheaded teenage girl we're all familiar with. "My name's Jean," she says, "I'll do it better than anyone for twenty dollars." Damn, that's harsh.

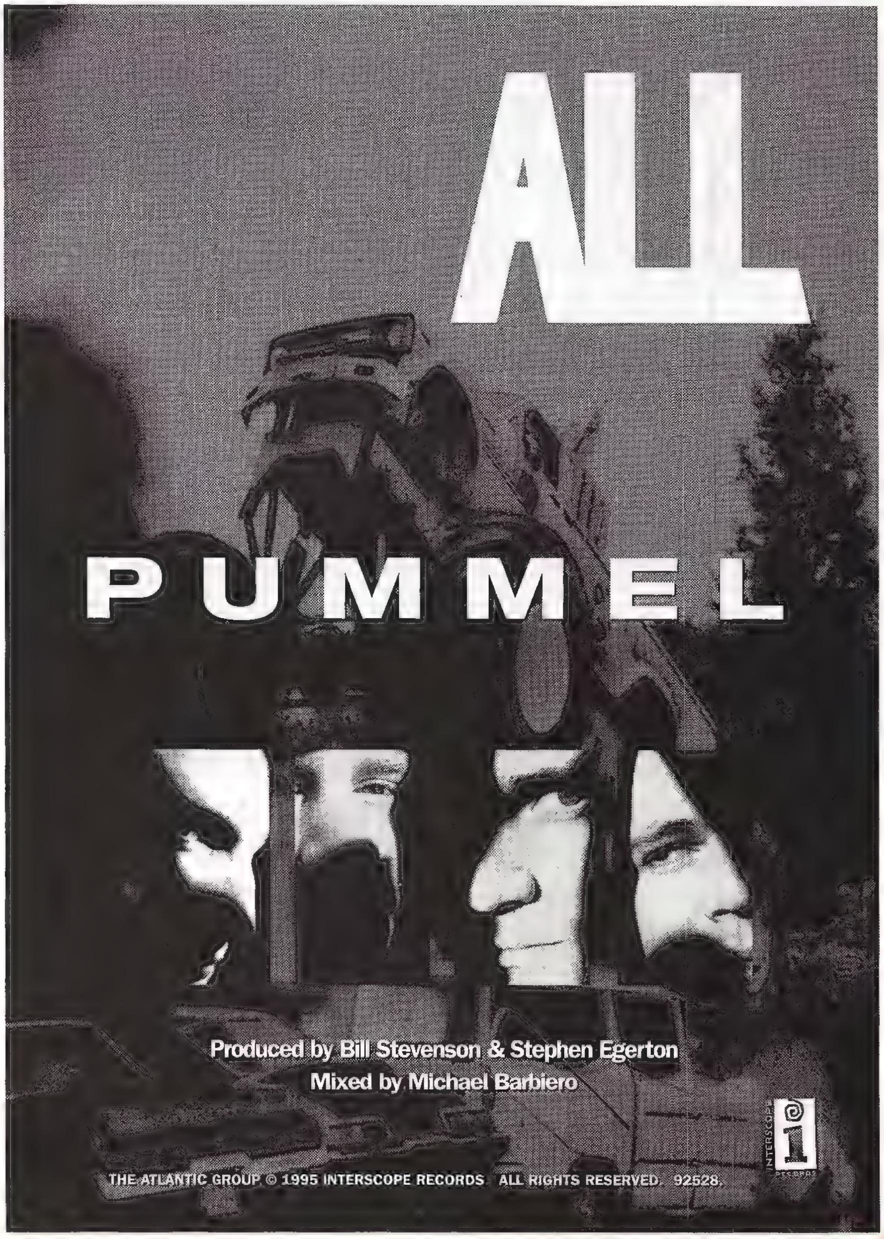
RATING: 10+

M.D. GEIST #1

CPM Comics

Created by Koichi Ohata, illustrated by Tim Eldred and Ohata

Putting aside the obvious draw of extreme violence and naked women, it must be said that this is manga. If you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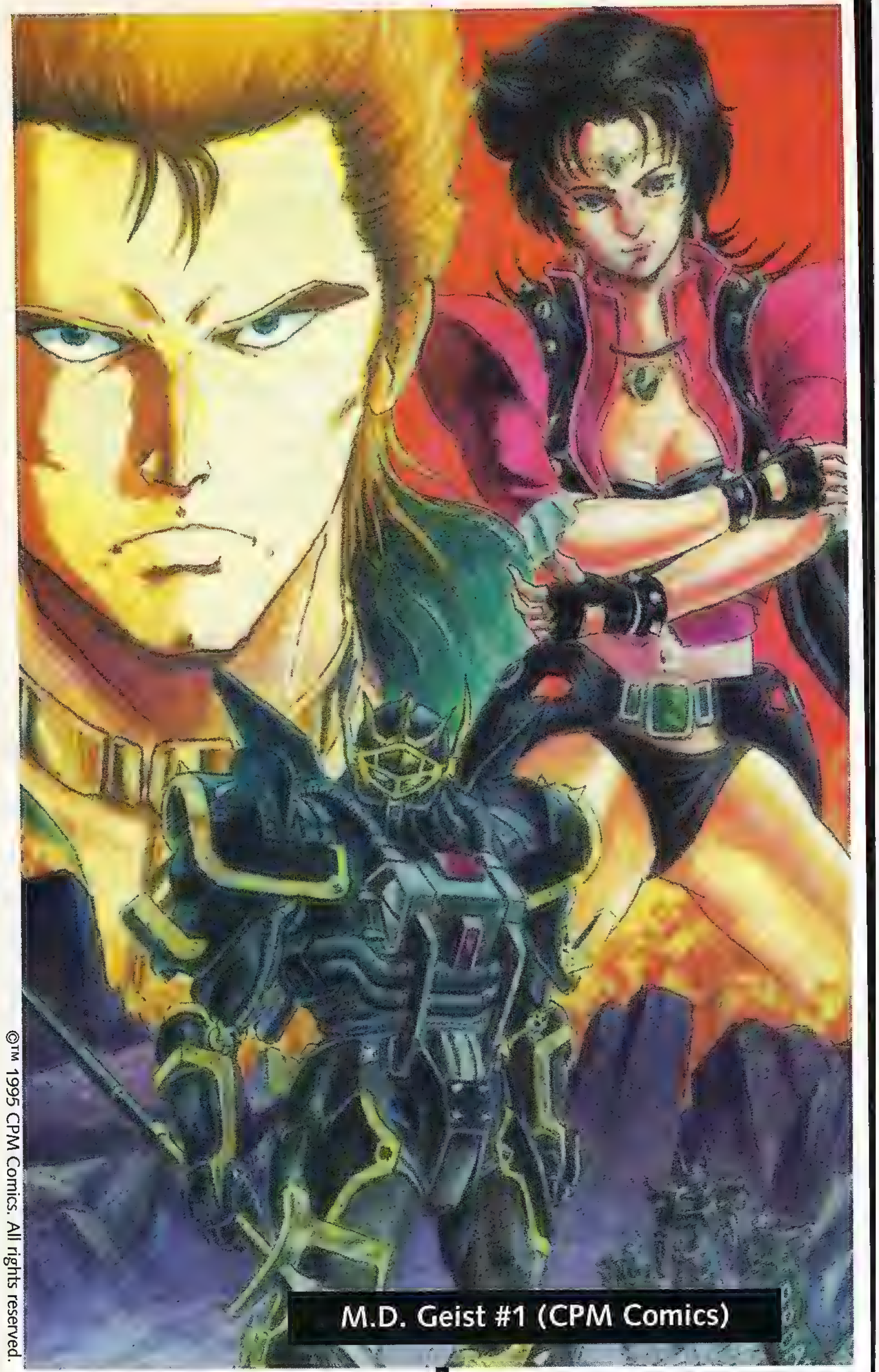

M.D. Geist #1 (CPM Comics)

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dig Japanese manga style art, you'll like the art in *M.D. Geist #1*. But if you don't, then forget it. Geist is a genetically engineered super solider who, unfortunately for his employers, turned out to have a mind of his own. He was imprisoned, but he's back. While there is a very confusing time lapse at the beginning of the story, overall, it works. The highlight of the book is the fact that the hero seems to be an arrogant s.o.b., the kind of anti-hero that American actors are afraid to play in movies these days. He's the hero, the underdog, and a jerk to boot.

RATING: 7

THE SHADOW & DOC SAVAGE #1

Dark Horse

Written by Steve Vance, illustrated by Stan Manoukian & Vince Roucher

Dark Horse has already established that they do the best and most faithful Shadow comics, so it comes as no surprise that the same goes for Doc Savage. Which isn't hard to do, considering how bad most Doc Savage comics have been. The company has created a world—a retro superhero universe—where these characters exist side by side, for the first time, and hopefully that will continue. The story here is classic pulp fiction, damsel in distress sets Doc after German scientists on the run from Nazi madmen and walking corpses. Of course, Doc is convinced the Shadow is involved and, well, it goes on from there. These characters are the original Batman and Superman, in a way, true classics.

RATING: 9

SKRULL KILL KREW #1

Marvel

Written by Grant Morrison & Mark Millar, penciled by Steve Yeowell, inked by Chris Ivy

Morrison & Millar have proven themselves over at DC's Vertigo, and it's awesome to find them working on a Marvel title. But then, this isn't just any Marvel title. It's probably the most unique thing Marvel has put out in a long time. Moonstomp, Ryder, Dice and Heidi are human who have acquired an unfortunately fatal alien virus which has given them Skrull-like morphing abilities. It also allows them to see past the human disguises of the many Skrull agents who have infiltrated Earth (ever see John Carpenter's *They Live*?) So what do they do with their new powers? Stop bank robberies? Hell no, they kill Skrulls. A blast.

RATING: 8.5

SOVEREIGN SEVEN #1

DC

Written by Chris Claremont, illustrated by Dwayne Turner

One of the most eagerly anticipated comics of the year features Chris Claremont's—one of the finest superhero writers in the biz—return to a monthly superhero book, this time his own creation. *Sovereign Seven* is packed with personality conflicts, ominous villains and heroes with mysterious histories, all Claremont signatures But the book's one major flaw is that there's just too damn many people in this first issue. With seven heroes, around a dozen villains and several human supporting characters, it can be hard to follow. Still, rest assured that Claremont knows where he's taking us. RATING: 8

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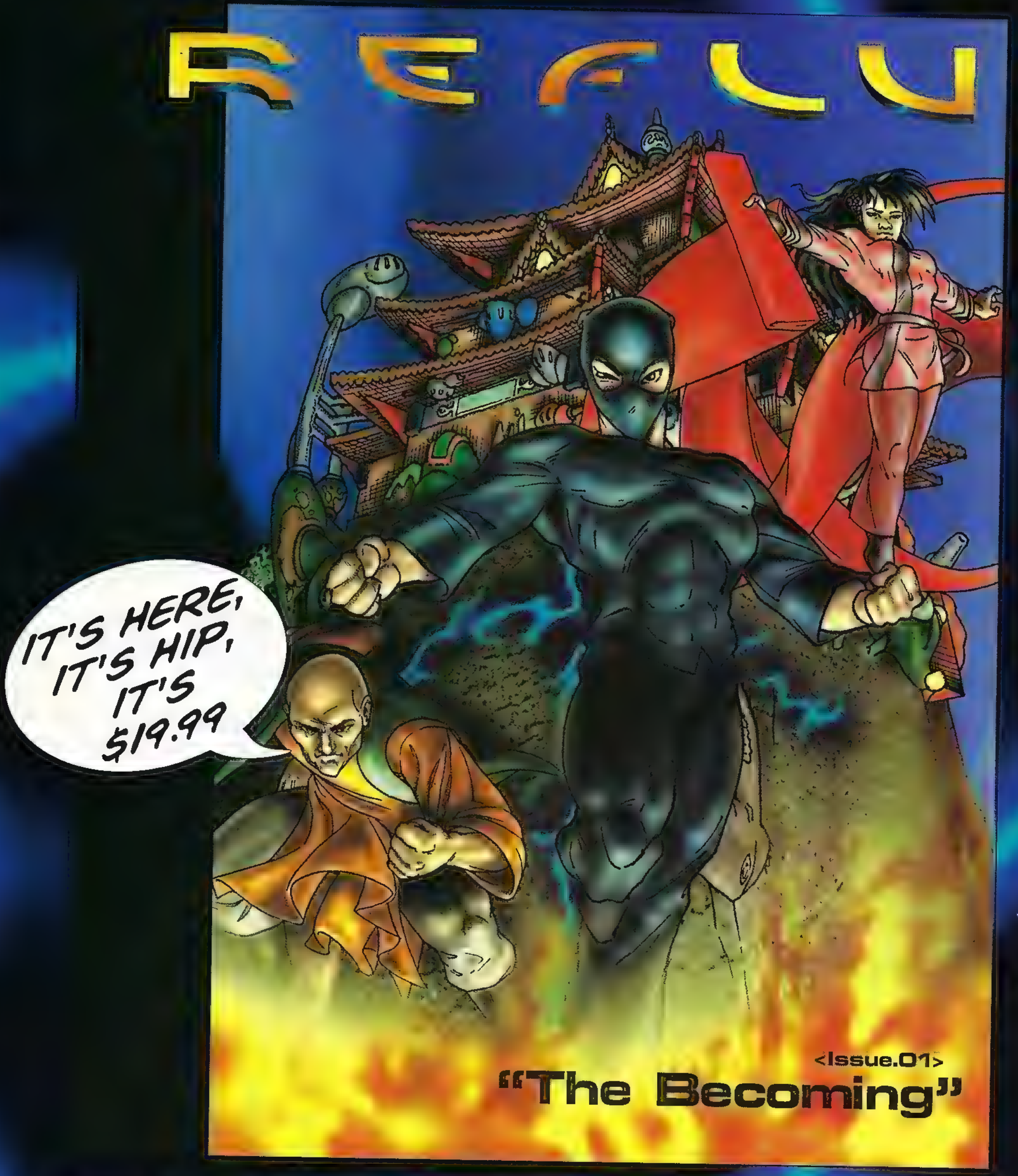
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music reviews

King Diamond

***1/2

KING DIAMOND

The Spider's Lullabye
(Metal Blade)

Unless you're a metal purist, chances are you won't be able to tell the difference between a King Diamond and a Mercyful Fate album. Chalk that up to the omnipresent double-kick drums, the spooky cathedral organ haunting the background, and, most importantly, Diamond's distinctive reverb-steeped banshee octave. Given the subject matter (scary evil and demonic horror) and Eighties-brand hard rock guitar, it almost seems redundant to revolve between two bands. But hey, this is metal.

The Spider's Lullabye may sound dated to anyone who only went as far as *Them*, or religion-lite in regards to the unholy *Melissa*, but it's still King Diamond. A range that could summon the hounds of hell, his voice reaches shrieking highs and possessed lows—textbook metal histrionics. Andy LaRocque, an old school melodic soloist, takes on a grittier guitar edge and proves once again that shred is not quite dead. Close your eyes and you'll swear you were back in 1985. As usual, another solid, creepy-as-hell album bubbling with everything we've come to expect of King Diamond.

—JEFF GILBERT

Misery Loves Co.

****

MISERY LOVES CO.

Misery Loves Co.
(Earache)

Melding the grindcore and industrial genre may have been done plenty of times before, but not to the magnitude Sweden's latest export, Misery Loves Co., has achieved with their self-titled full-length debut. The disc breaths humanity into a metallic sound and raw power—resulting in a bold mix of sheer terror and astonishing enjoyment. The general vibe is something invigorating and cunning, making their first outing (if you don't count their '94 EP *Private Hell*) very in vogue and pertinent. Rarely has their been rabid thrash this sincere. Misery Loves Co. (Singer & guitarist Patrick Wiren and programmer & guitarist Orjan Ornkloc) is a brutally heavy wall of reckoning worthy of the truest hard music fan.

—MITCH JOEL

***

PRIMUS

Tales From The Punch Bowl
(Interscope)

Les Claypool is a rock n' roll science experiment gone horribly wrong. For starters, his bass guitar sounds like a flat tire. Onstage, he looks like a flamingo on uppers, keeping time with that spastic leg of his. And he writes songs like "Wynona's Big Brown Beaver," "Professor Nutterbutter's House Of Treats" and "Year of the Parrot" with the straightest of faces. As unexplainable as the Loch Ness Monster or Rush Limbaugh, Claypool and Primus' stop-n-go hiccuping quasi-metal has bewildered, bewitched, and bedazzled those drawn to alternative rock's answer to alternative. Which makes trying to find even ground on the band's latest epileptic fit, *Tales From The Punch Bowl*, even more challenging.

Musically, this stuff is as avante garde and silly as anything Zappa ever composed, maybe (at the risk of being blasphemous) more so. Hee-Haw riffing and (gasp!) that blown-radial bass thumping bounce happily between time signatures only a Chinese mathematician could figure out. And I'm convinced the drummer has four arms and five legs. At the core of any Primus album—and this one is no exception—is its magnetism. You can't help but wonder how the hell they make all that sound with just a simple guitar, bass, and drums. No, this album isn't serious, even though the musicianship behind it is. And yes, you should check it out. Anything to get over Green Day.

—JEFF GILBERT

Ugly Kid Joe
Menace to Sobriety

***1/2

UGLY KID JOE

Menace To Sobriety
(Mercury)

By the sound of things, Ugly Kid Joe appears to have been hanging out with Skid Row, gleaning as many overcranked guitar tones, screechy vocals, and sac-snagging solos as the definition of plagiarism would allow. Nah, I'm not inferring the Ugly One's are ripping Skid Mark, uh...Row...off. What I am saying is that somewhere along the line, someone got a clue and toughened things up to the point where they actually might be able to live down their novelty catchphrase hit "(I Hate) Everything About You" and made-by-MTV career.

Thankfully, most of the band's pop inclinations have been drowned out by raging chaos monster riffing. This is good news for those of us who choke on hook-lined choruses. Secondly, the lead work is hot enough to start your barbeçue. All out headbanging ("God") fuses with a high-test adrenaline ("C.U.S.T.") and growling bass ground shaking ("Tomorrow's World"). Motley Crue should have this much energy. We knew they were capable of a record as hard 'n destructo as this. The reward, however, belongs to those of us who had the stomach to wait out "Cat's In The Cradle" and "Neighbors."

—JEFF GILBERT

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DEICIDE

Once Upon The Cross
(Roadrunner)
**1/2

MORBID ANGEL

Domination
(Giant)

Death metal, as a form of music, has backed itself into a corner with no escape. The genre's permutations are extremely limited, its borders narrowly defined, and many key bands don't display talent to take it any further.

Death metal has regressed over the years, to the point where its fans simply outgrow it as their musical knowledge expands. While even below-average Eighties bands like Germany's Sodom showed distinct improvement over the course of three or four albums, today's death warriors rarely display such progress.

Take Deicide. *Once Upon The Cross*, their third effort, is produced better than their first two, but there's little else to distinguish it from its predecessors. Lots of machine-gun double bass and snare, tuned down riffs that sound like leftovers from the first two Death albums, and the supremely silly snarling of frontman Glen Benton are the key components of this 28-minute musical void.

The unusual, chugging counter-rhythms that kick off "Christ Denied" prove interesting, as do one or two other moments, but *Once Upon The Cross* is otherwise stuffed with generic time-fillers that lack dynamics to even be truly heavy. And the sight of Benton scowling on the back cover has become as much of a cliché as the shoe-gazing, forlorn, hair-in-the-eyes geeks who populate the "alternative" world.

Morbid Angel can and do fall into the same trap as Deicide on occasion, but *Domination* indicates at least an attempt at higher goals. It's easily the quartet's most listenable work and incorporates a wider range of textures and arrangements than most death metal albums currently out there.

While the band can't resist blasting into hyperspeed oblivion again and again, *Domination* also features slower, more restrained passages that showcase their ability to create a certain mood. While that mood is invariably one of creeping doom, it adds resonance to tracks like "Where The Slime Live" and "Inquisition," Frontman David Vincent also modulates his vocal approach on several songs, sacrificing approved death metal growls for a slightly more sinister clarity.

Ultimately, *Domination*'s single-mindedness leaves the listener with zero emotional connection to the music, but the album's deliberate crafting, guitarist Trey Azagthoth's classical flourishes, and new axeman Erik Rutan's input attest to the band's willingness to develop. If only their peers felt the same way.

—DON KAYE

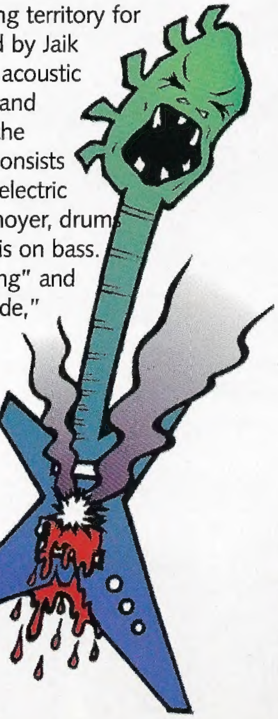
***1/2

XANAX 25

Denial Fest
(Futurist)

The debut effort by Xanax 25 is one of the freshest sounds this year. Straight out of New York City, Xanax 25 takes inspiration from the local alternative music scene. But don't let that fool you—Xanax 25 is blazing territory for a new sound. Led by Jaik Miller, who plays acoustic guitar, sings lead and handles most of the lyrics, Xanax 25 consists of Matt Stein on electric guitar, Rob Cournoyer, drums and Jack De Santis on bass. Tracks like "Painting" and "Scary Dreams Fade," *Denial Fest* mix everything from Led Zeppelin and Metallica to Madder Rose into straight alternative genius, with some incredibly clean production.

—AKIM ENOJ



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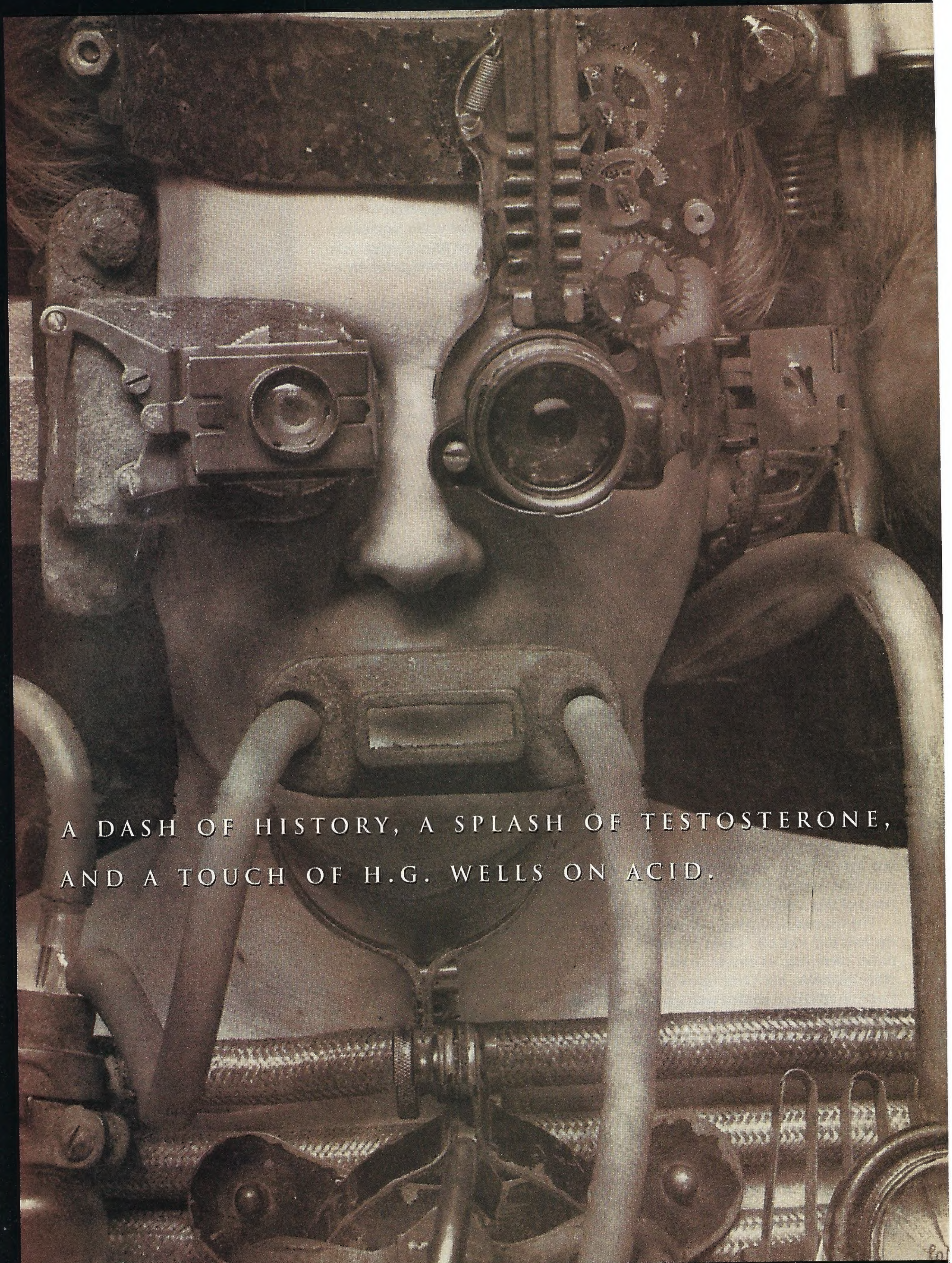
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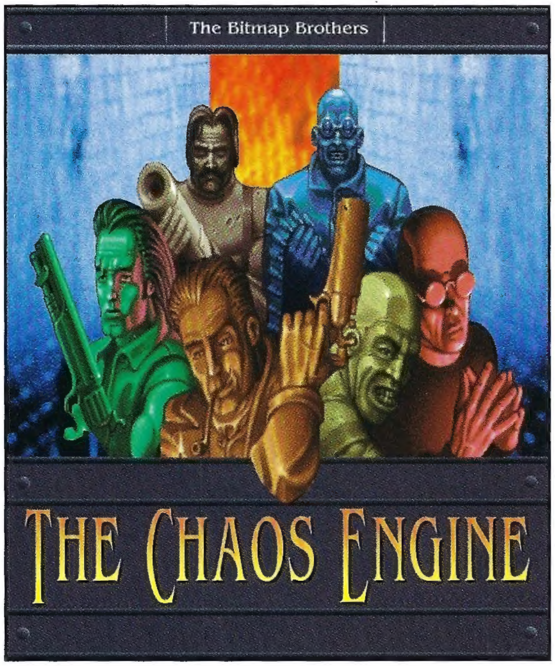

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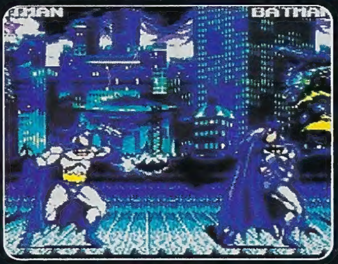
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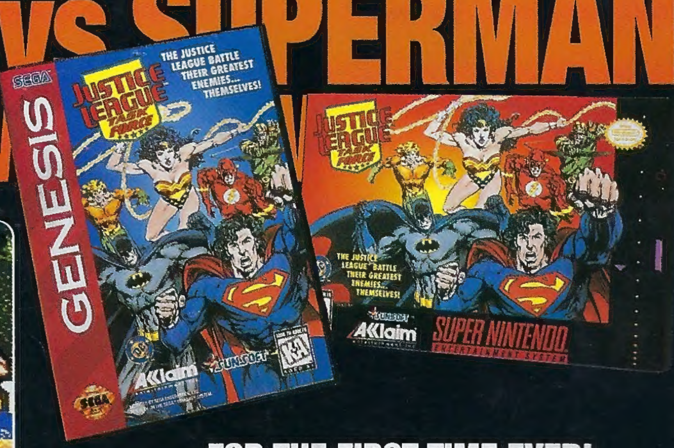
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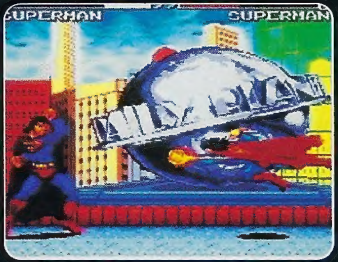
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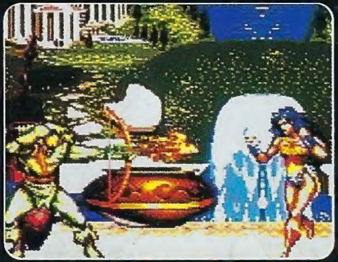

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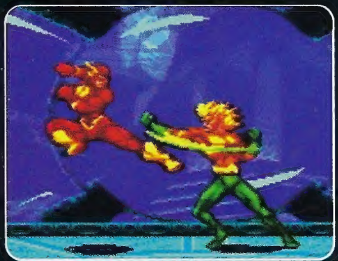

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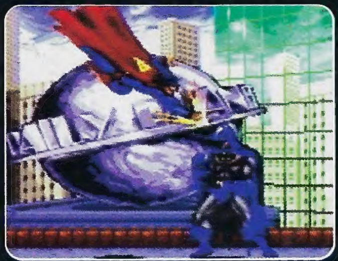

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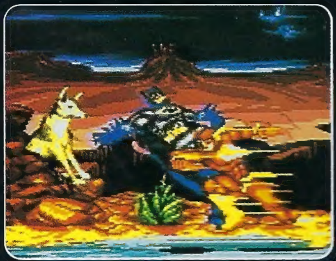

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